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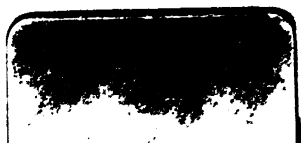


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1816

PRACTICAL

SERMONS,

ON THE

TEN COMMANDMENTS.

BY THE

REV. JAMES CALDWELL

MINISTER OF THE EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE
AND DOMINION BELONGING TO THE REV. W. C. CALDWELL.

THE FIRST OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IS THAT WE SHOULD
HAVE NO OTHER GODS BUT HIM.

AND THAT WE SHOULD NOT MAKE FOR OURSELVES
ANY GRaven IMAGES.

THE SECOND

COMMANDMENT IS THAT WE SHOULD NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD
IN VAIN: BUT WHOEVER SHALL CURSE OR SWEAR BY THE NAME OF THE LORD
HIS GOD, HE SHALL BE GUILTY.

THE THIRD

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.



M. DEIGHTON, PRINTER, YORK.

TO THE
CONGREGATION

COMPOSING THE SUNDAY EVENING AUDIENCE,

AT THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. SAVIOUR,

THIS VOLUME,

PUBLISHED IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE WISHES

OF SEVERAL OF THEM,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY THEIR

AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

PREFACE.

THE following Sermons were prepared for the pulpit, without any ulterior view. The Author cannot quite satisfy his own mind on the prudence of listening to the solicitation for their publication, from several of his hearers; since, however much their judgment on other subjects may be respected by him, he is apprehensive, that, in this case, it may not be undisturbed by the influence of friendly partiality. Several considerations, however, concurred with their importunity, in determining him to accede to their wishes. Few treatises have fallen into his hands, in which the moral law of

God is considered, apart from large and expensive systems of general theology. Many of these appear not to bear, with distinctness of application, on some existing evils and duties, which seem to him to call for particular notice; while others must be allowed not to enforce the law on principles sufficiently evangelical.

Holding as all-important that fundamental tenet of his beloved church—that “*Articulus stantis aut cadentis Ecclesiæ*”—the doctrine of “*justification by faith in Christ without works*,” and aware of the grave charge so confidently brought against its strenuous advocates, of denying the necessity of good works, disparaging holiness, and setting the law of God aside, the Author ventures to appeal to the contents of this volume, not only whether the charge be well founded with respect to himself, but also whether the doctrines of justification by faith and of real holiness be not perfectly compatible with each other; nay, whether they be not, each in its place, indis-

pensably necessary for constituting and completing the christian character.—He is entirely convinced, that a clear and comprehensive understanding of the law of God is the proper preparation of mind for seeking justification solely through the Saviour's merits; and also, that a true and justifying faith is, in its natural, not to say necessary effect, so far from making void, that it establishes the law, as the approved and revered rule of a holy life to every sincere believer. He, therefore, infers, that a faithful exposition of the law is among the most important and efficacious functions of that minister, who desires to bring his unconverted hearers in penitence and faith to Christ, and to edify them that believe in all holiness and godliness of living.

Such was the two-fold object which the Author proposed to himself in the following Discourses. He is unaffectedly sensible of the imperfect manner in which he has realized his own wishes. But he is relieved by the consideration, that Paul would plant, and Apollos

water in vain, except the Lord should give the increase; and that he condescends to employ and bless the feeblest efforts of the least of all his servants, in promoting his *kingdom* upon earth, that all the *power* may be confessed to be his own, and that all the *glory* may be laid at his feet.

York, July 31st, 1826.

SERMON I.

THE USE OF THE LAW.

1 TIMOTHY i. 8.

We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.

MAN in his primitive innocence was placed under a covenant of works. The condition of his happiness and safety required him to obey the will of God, which he was then able to do. The language of his Creator was : “do this and live ; in the day that thou sinnest thou shalt die.” By the fall of Adam, sin entered into the world and corrupted all his race ; and left us, for every transgression, subject to the condemnation of the law, and the wrath of God.—To recover us from the power and punishment of sin, was the merciful object of the incarnation and death of the Son of God. And if, through the operation of the Spirit of God on our hearts, we have sincerely embraced the gospel, and are become Christians indeed, we are translated out

of our wretched condition into a state enriched with the most exalted privileges and blessings. Our understandings are enlightened and our hearts renewed, by the word and spirit of our God. Our sins are atoned for by the blood of Christ; and by faith in him we are freely justified and accounted righteous before God. We are separated from a perishing world, and adopted to be the sons of God and heirs of his glory. And because we are sons, the spirit of adoption, in his purifying and comforting influences, is sent forth upon us. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;" we are no longer under the law as a covenant of works, by which our title to heaven is to be determined, but under grace. Christ has fulfilled the law in our stead, and as the bond of a covenant, it has no demand upon us whatever. In the 7th chapter of the epistle to the Romans, the relation in which believers stand to the old covenant of works under the law, and the new covenant of grace under Christ, is illustrated by the relation in which a wife stands to a former husband deceased, and a second husband living: "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God."

But then it will be objected, as it ever has been from the days of the Apostle, that to maintain the exemption of true believers from the covenant of works, and their justification by faith in Christ without works, is to set the law of God aside, to deny the necessity of holiness, and to open the door to licentiousness of life. Does St. Paul allow this conclusion to be correct? "Do we," says he, "make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law."

I have taken frequent occasion to shew, that it is by faith in Jesus, and by virtue of a living spiritual union with him alone, that real holiness can be produced; and, by holiness, I mean good works upon right principles, from right motives, and for a right end; the willing conformity of both heart and life to the holy laws of God. Indeed the charge, that they, who hold justification by faith, must be lax in moral conduct, appears, in point of fact and experience, to be as inconsistent as it is unfounded. For it is most notorious, that they who, according to the scriptures, rest their hopes of justification at the day of judgment on the merits of Christ alone, without regard to any work or merit of their own, are the very, and perhaps the only persons, who, at another breath, are charged by these very same complainants, with over strictness,

with pushing the duties of a Christian to excess, and with separating themselves too scrupulously from the customs and practices of the world.

Is it then asked, as by St. Paul's objector, wherefore serveth the law? What is its office and use under the gospel? To whom does it apply, and how? I answer, in the words of my text; that to every one, whatever be his character and condition, whether a Christian in reality or only in name, "the law is good, if he use it lawfully." In proof of this, before I proceed to a particular consideration of the moral law, in the order of the ten commandments, (which I propose to do in the evening of the 2nd. Sunday of each month,) some prefatory observations seem necessary to be made respecting the law of God generally, to the following arrangement of which my text leads us. I shall,

I. Consider the institution, extent, and application of the law:

II. How it is lawfully used: and

III. The good ends which the lawful use of it answers.—

I. We consider the institution, extent and application of the law.—When God formed man upright in his own image, the moral law, which inculcates eternal, unchangeable truth, and perfect goodness, was written in his heart.

By the fall, the fair image of God's purity was defaced, some faint lines of distinction only of right and wrong being left upon the natural conscience. When God was about to separate to himself the people of Israel, with a view to preserve, and perpetuate in the earth, the knowledge of his character and will, he gave them the law from Sinai, not now inscribed on their hearts as before, but engraven on two tables of stone; and accompanied with the institution of sacrifices as atonements for sin; promising also, in the fulness of the blessing of gospel times, once more by his spirit to put the law in the inward parts of Christ's redeemed, and write it in their hearts, when he should become their God, and they should become his people. Such was the *institution* of the law—We proceed to its *extent* and *application*.

The moral law of the ten commandments, is a complete summary of all human duty to God, to each other, and to themselves. Though, in its spirit and principle, it may all be comprehended in this short maxim, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; and thy neighbour as thyself;" in its extent and application it is broad and comprehensive. We are not to limit the commandments to their literal

meaning; otherwise, a great part of our thoughts, and words, and even of our actions, would be exempt from the notice and control of the law of God.—It has the whole word of God for its expositor, the regulation of the whole sphere of human principle and action for its object. There is no duty enforced, or sin condemned, in all the revealed will of God, which does not range itself under one or other of the commandments. “The law is *spiritual*.” It does not merely regard the outward action; which, though good in its effects, may spring from the worst of motives, and while laudable in the eyes of men, may be sinful and odious in the sight of God. It goes down into the heart and motives, and tries every thought, intention and principle of the soul. And it is not till we are taught by the spirit of God to know ourselves according to this spiritual and internal bearing of the law, that we are ever truly humbled before God under a proper sense of our corruption, sinfulness and desert. “I had not known sin, says St. Paul, except the law had said: Thou shalt not covet.”—Each law, though single in the letter, must be interpreted as having, in spirit, a double aspect. Whenever it commands any thing as a duty, it thereby forbids the opposite as a sin; so likewise every sin condemned,

implies an opposite duty. Thus, when it commands us to keep the Sabbath day holy, it thereby denounces the wrath of God on every kind of profanation of it: and when it forbids us to have any Gods but the one blessed Jehovah, it virtually commands us to have him for our Lord and our God.—If it commands a duty, or condemns a sin of any kind, it applies to, and commands or forbids *all* of that kind. When it commands us to have the Lord for our God, it in effect commands us to love, to fear, to trust in, to obey him; and when it forbids stealing, it forbids all fraud and injustice whatever.—I will only add, under this head, that in forbidding the commission of any sin, it forbids our exposing ourselves to all unnecessary temptation to that sin; and enjoins the use of all means calculated, under the blessing of God, to preserve us from evil, and keep us in the love and fear of God.—Such is God's law of ten commandments in its institution, extent, and application. We proceed, then,

II. To consider, how it is lawfully used.

1. We use it lawfully, when we receive and respect it in its full extent, and in every part of it. There is hardly any man, however wicked, who does not feel something like reverence for some parts of God's commands. A man will coolly break and profane the sabbath, who

dares not curse and swear. The debauchee would shudder at the thought of perpetrating murder under the sixth; and the covetous miser, of committing adultery under the seventh. But if we could keep nine of the commandments perfectly, in their full extent, and only sinned against God under one, we should be as really, though not so extensively, guilty before God, as if we broke them every one. Every wilful sin is an act of impious rebellion against the will, authority and government of God; and hence St. James affirms, that "whoso keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth against one point, he is guilty of all."

2. We use the law lawfully, when we bring every part of our character, the inward as well as the outward man, to the test of its requirements. We must remember that, whereas *we* are obliged to guess at the *heart* and *motive* from the *action*, God, in trying an action, looks at the *heart* from which the action springs. He knows whether what is done, proceeds from love to his character, and from respect to his will and glory. This only is true obedience: "Whatever ye do, in word or deed, do all to the glory of God, through Christ Jesus." An action, though apparently agreeable to the law of God, if it originate in some base, selfish, unholy motive, is in his sight an act of disobedience,

a positive sin. The Pharisees did a thing which the law requires, when they worshipped God with their lips;—but it was not obedience in them, it was hypocrisy; for “their hearts were far from him.” Jehu did an action which the law required, when he rooted idolatry out of the land, inviting men to see his zeal for the Lord of Hosts; but it soon appeared that his object was not the glory of God, but his own distinction and advancement. Neither was Amaziah’s conduct better than splendid sin, “who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.”

3. We use the law lawfully, when we seriously believe, and fully admit, that it contains eternal and unalterable truth—that our holy God could not have given a law less holy, less extensive—that every being, in proportion as he is holy and fit for heaven, loves the law—that every transgression of it must expose us to divine justice, as guilty offenders—that the penalty of every sin is death eternal, and that, till we seek mercy and forgiveness, in his appointed way, for each sin of our lives the curse of the law and the wrath of God abide upon us. All this must be true in the very nature of things. All this God has declared to be true; and, consequently, the man who indulges

expectations to the contrary—who hopes that he may commit sin, without incurring the punishment, (which is as clearly revealed as the law) makes God a liar, and acts more insanely than the man, who, in this country, should commit forgery or murder, and flatter himself that he was not guilty of a capital crime, and liable to suffer for it. But if we receive the law of God in its full extent ; if, under the illuminating and convincing power of the humbly-sought Spirit of God, we *try our whole selves* by it, our *actions, words, thoughts, tempers, appetites, passions, and motives* ; and ascertain how far we have, or have not, obeyed the law of God, *from a principle of love to him and respect to his glory*—under the solemn conviction, that the wages of every sin of omission or commission is death—is everlasting misery ; then, as we come

III, and lastly, to shew, this lawful use of the law answers good *ends*, produces happy effects upon us, whatever our state and character may be.

1. This lawful use of the law is good for the *unconverted*, whether a wicked or a self-righteous man. When, under a serious and spiritual understanding of the law, he not only surveys his actions, but enters with its light into the secret chambers of his heart, he discovers his

true character in all its horrid deformities. He perceives that his heart has never felt the love of God, the principle of all true obedience; that it has been the seat of unbelief, selfishness and sin, the nest of impure desires and hellish tempers; that his actions have been many of them wicked, and almost all done from wrong motives; and that he has not lived for the glory of God, but provoked him every day. The more he watches the workings of his heart, the more he discovers its deceitfulness and desperate wickedness. His best actions are now seen in their proper light, as needing the mercy, not claiming the reward of his holy God. Though alive once, when he knew little and felt less of the heart-searching law; now that the commandment is come to his conscience with light and power, sin has revived, and he is in his own eyes "dead," a condemned inexcusable sinner. And when he reads, "that the wages of sin is death;" when his numberless transgressions stand in terrific array before him, each exposing him to the sentence of the law, and calling down the vengeance of his insulted God upon him, what soul can endure the charge and the agony? A spirit thus wounded who can bear? But whither is the sinner to flee? He perceives, after many efforts, that it is quite vain.

to hope for deliverance, peace and salvation, by any thing that he can do. He cannot be saved by works under the law, except he keep it perfectly. But if he could forget all his past sins, he finds that the law is so pure and extensive, that he cannot keep it for a day. The more he tries, the more he is condemned. In this awful state, the gospel points his despairing eye to the cross: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." He believes; he makes the trial; he finds in Jesus Christ the Saviour all he wants—free pardon of all his sins, a spotless robe of perfect righteousness—peace of conscience, a sense of God's pardoning love, and a disposition to love, and a power to do what the law commands, but gives him no strength to perform. "Thus the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." It drives us from Sinai to Calvary. It pulls down every false foundation of hope, that we may build on Christ alone, the rock of ages. It wounds that Christ may heal; it humbles that Christ may lift us up; it condemns that he may save.

2. After the law has brought a penitent sinner to Christ for pardon, peace and life, it is, if lawfully used, good and useful to him as a *justified believer*. He is called to be holy; and the practical part of the word of God, which

is a comment upon the law, shews him at large what is sinful and what is holy. It therefore becomes a light to his feet and a lamp to his paths. He professes to love his Saviour: Jesus Christ says to him: "if thou lovest me keep my commandments." The law, then, though no longer the rule of God's judgments towards him, is the rule of his life towards God. To be conformed to the law is to be conformed to the image of God, and to be capable of heavenly happiness with him. That divine Spirit who gives him faith in Christ and peace by faith, gives him a holy taste and character; and he finds that his holiness and his happiness must grow together. As no man can, on right principles, serve God, but as a humble grateful believer in Jesus, so every Christian will and must obey God, in a proportion as he believes and loves. In every true believer is the promise of our God fulfilled, in a measure: "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." The law of God, therefore, is in his heart; and while Christ is all his hope, holiness is the element he breathes, and longs to breathe more purely.

Such being, my brethren, the excellency of

the law when lawfully used, it is only necessary, in this preparatory discourse, to offer you a few short practical directions, for a proper knowledge and use of the law.

1. Let me entreat you, my dear hearers, if you regard your immortal souls, diligently to read, hear, and meditate upon the *word of God at large*, which explains the law and will of God by precept, and illustrates them by example. There is in all ranks of society a deplorable neglect of seriously searching the scriptures; and consequently, a deplorable ignorance of the things which belong to their duty and their peace. Hence also it is, that when the truths of God are plainly preached; when the law and the gospel are faithfully addressed to the conscience, they are resisted as the peculiar notions of the preacher, when they ought to be recognized and revered as the undeniable declarations of God.

2. Let your hearing and study of the word of life be ever accompanied with earnest humble prayer to God, for the powerful aid of his grace, to give you a spiritual taste and judgment, to dispel your ignorance, to guide you into all truth, and to fasten it with power on your hearts.

3. In considering the several parts of the

law of God, your object should be to comprehend its full bearing, extent and meaning. In order to succeed, you cannot take a better model than our Saviour's view and explanation of a part of the law, in his sermon on the mount. Let the most correct and moral character, for instance, that ever lived, honestly examine himself by our Lord's explanation of the sixth, seventh, and ninth commandments, in the 5th of St. Matthew, and if he be not given up of God to spiritual blindness and gross self-delusion, he will discover himself to be as *really*, I do not say as *heinously*, guilty under each of them, as if he had actually committed murder, adultery, and perjury. And this specimen of interpretation will assist you in trying yourselves under the other commandments, and in leading you to a just view of your character and state as you are known to God. Thus will "every mouth be stopped and all will plead guilty before God." This, through the Divine blessing, will be the certain result, if you make the *application* of what you learn, faithfully to your own case. We are too apt to hear for others, not for ourselves. David was roused with indignation at the cruel wickedness of the rich man, mentioned to him by Nathan; but saw not that himself was meant, till the prophet thundered in his astonished

ear: "thou art the man." Knowing that in many things we offend, and in every thing fall short, we should have a constant eye on ourselves, expecting conviction, in every page, of sin and defect. And, lastly, whenever a conviction of sin or defect is fastened on your conscience, by any part of God's word, always endeavour to class it under that particular commandment of the ten, to which it belongs. Thus will you feel, that you have broken the law of God itself, and come under its awful condemnation. Thus will you, as a guilty sinner, perceive your need of the blood of Christ to wash your guilt away, and of the spirit of God to enable you "to go and sin no more." When you find that, by want of love to God, you have broken the first commandment; by a careless wandering heart in his worship, the fourth; and by an idle word the third, and so of the rest; you will no longer think yourself responsible for *light* or *few* sins. You will feel, that your only refuge from the wrath to come is the cross of Jesus; and as the commandments are read before you in the church service, you will with equal earnestness pray after each: "Lord have mercy upon me for my past sins," and "incline mine heart, for the future, to keep this law."

SERMON II.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Exodus xx. 3.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

ON a former occasion, I laid down some general Rules for obtaining a correct view of the spirituality and extent of the law of God. It appeared, that all things commanded and forbidden, throughout the whole Bible, arrange themselves under some one of the ten commandments given from Mount Sinai, as the perfect, unalterable will and law of God, for man to observe. I now proceed to a methodical explanation, with the word of God for a comment and illustration of them. I have only again to entreat you to bear in mind, that they are to be received by us in their full and extensive sense as containing all the branches of inward and outward holiness, and

condemning every description of sin, specified in the scriptures at large. My desire and prayer to God for you is, that by the mighty power of his Spirit, every unconverted person may be deeply convinced, that he has not kept any one of the ten commandments, nor can keep them perfectly; in order that he may humbly look to Jesus Christ for a better righteousness than his own; and that every justified believer in Jesus, may see more of the extent and beauty of the law, and make it, more than ever, the regulator of his heart and the guide of his paths.

The law given to Moses was written on two tables of stone. One tablet contained the four first commandments; the other, the six last. The four first, comprehending our duty to God, justly claim the precedence; the other six establish our various duties to our fellow creatures and to ourselves. Of the four, which relate to our duty to God, the first in order is the first in importance. Our Lord denominates the purport and substance of it, "the first and great commandment." It determines the views we should entertain of our holy and adorable God, the dispositions we should feel towards him, and the homage we should pay him. Such is its vital energy and influence, that it prepares

the heart, where it is inscribed and felt, for obeying all the rest. But if the heart be wrong here, no one of the other nine can be observed in a manner acceptable to God.—It is a rule never to be forgotten in interpreting the law of God, that when a duty is commanded or a sin forbidden, the opposite sin is forbidden or duty commanded. In explaining the first commandment, I shall

I. Endeavour to shew the duty it enjoins;

II. What sins it condemns.

I. The *duty* implied is, that we know, and with a suitable frame of mind receive and acknowledge the great and blessed Jehovah in the characters, attributes and works, in which he has revealed himself to us. Before we can receive and acknowledge him aright, it is necessary that we should *know* and *believe* in him aright. They that would come to God must know and believe that he is, what he is: without such knowledge and belief, it is impossible to please him. If “the spirit of wisdom and revelation is given us in the right knowledge of the true God” we cordially believe in him according to his word, as the one only, eternal, infinite, wise, holy, merciful Almighty God, in three persons, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; a God who hates iniquity, who will punish in eternal torments

all who live and die in a state of sinful rebellion against him; but who pardons, loves, and will eternally glorify with himself, all who being renewed to repentance by his Holy Spirit, return to him by faith in Jesus Christ the mediator. If we have taken him for our God in sincerity of heart, we recognize him in his sovereign authority, governing, directing, overruling all things by his unerring providence; we hold all our blessings of him; we refer all our talents and powers to him, and feel that we are bound by the strongest ties of duty, gratitude, and interest, to fear him, to love him, to worship him, to put our whole trust in him, and to serve him truly all the days of our lives. Jesus Christ is become our righteousness and our hope; the Holy Spirit, our sanctifier, and comforter; the Father, our reconciled God; whose favor we value, whose holy character we revere, whose perfect laws we respect, and whose glory we live to *promote*.

If such is the spirit and character of the first commandment, it follows, that there are two kinds of sins by which it may be broken—either when we have and acknowledge no God; or when we have other gods besides or before the great and only God; either when we are guilty of *atheism* or of *idolatry*. An Atheist, strictly

speaking, is one who denies that there is a God; or which is the same, in effect, who feels, wills, and acts, as if there was no God to whom he is accountable. Professed atheists have been very few; for indeed, surrounded as we are with objects which testify the wisdom, power and goodness of their Author, he must be a fool that says in his heart: "there is no God." But *practical* atheism abounds. When our blessed Lord expounded the force and meaning of this commandment, he repeated from the Old Testament its true and spiritual import: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." This is properly to have the Lord for our God. God claims our hearts; he is worthy of the supreme affections of our souls. If we do not love him above all things, trust in him, and hold communion with him, as "the God of all grace and consolation;" if we do not rest in him as our satisfying portion, and adore him as the glorious perfection of all excellence; if we do not sanctify him in our hearts, and walk before him in filial love, reverence, trust and obedience, he is not our God at all; to use the Apostle's expression, we are "without God," or, as it may be rendered, we are "*atheists* in the world." Not to have

low, sensual, downward bent of our fallen hearts, we prefer other things to God ; “ we love the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for evermore.”—But we have seen, that to have God for our God, is to *love him*. Whatever we love and trust in most, to make us happy, is our God. Whatever, then, we love more than God, becomes to us a false God, “ another God ;” and

II. We are guilty of the second sin forbidden, *Idolatry*. It is not the Persian alone, who adores the sun, or the Indian who falls down to the monstrous, obscene Idol at Juggernaut, that is an Idolater.—The word of God declares, that he who pampers his appetites, “ makes a God of his belly ;” and that “ the covetous man,” who loves his money more than God, and feels more desirous to make a fortune than to save his soul, “ is an Idolater.” The sin of idolatry, then, against this commandment, is very extensive indeed ; and *every man living*, whose heart is not converted to God by faith in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is an idolater in the whole range of his affections and principles. Since we should love God with undivided affection,—since to seek his glory should be the supreme object and business of our life ; and since our trust should be placed in him alone

as our only and all-sufficient helper ; whatever else rivals him in our affections and pursuits, or is made the foundation of our confidence, becomes an idol to us. To particularize a little : we are guilty of idolatry, when we ascribe what occurs to us to chance, to fortune, or to second causes, and do not trace it up to the God of providence, without whose permission not a sparrow falls to the ground ; when we trust to our own wisdom and reason, instead of studying his word in fervency of prayer, and of receiving it in simplicity of faith ; when we rely on our own goodness, instead of trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and strength ; when “ loving the praises of men more than the praise of God,” we are kept back by the fear of man and regard for our worldly interest or reputation, from boldly confessing and faithfully serving the Lord Jesus Christ,—in all these cases we are idolaters in the judgment of God.—When this world engages our earnest thoughts, anxious cares, and eager pursuits, while the glory of God, and the state and prospect of our souls, interest us little or nothing ;—when we seek our chief comforts and pleasures, not from God, but from the world ; whether those pleasures are allowed to be corrupting, or pleaded for as innocent, it is

plain that we make the world our God ; we love it as our portion ; we give it our hearts. And not to multiply instances farther, when our business and callings, and lawful comforts, and our amusements and studies, however rational and intellectual and refined, occupy that time and attention which should be devoted to the service of God and man, and to the preparation of our souls for heaven ; when they hold that seat in our hearts, where God only should be enthroned ; they are idols, and we are idolaters.

My brethren, I am anxious that this fundamental commandment of God's law should be distinctly understood, and have its just weight in your minds. It is this law, which, if the spirit of the Lord impress it on the conscience, is calculated to convince and humble every unconverted heart.—Many may plead not guilty of some sins committed against other commandments, but here none can escape. It is the duty, the dignity of man, to love the Lord his God, Father, Saviour and Sanctifier, with all his heart ; now who amongst you, (the renewed, justified believer excepted) will presume to affirm that he so loves God? What proof of such love can you produce? or is not all proof against you. God is scarcely in your thoughts.

You carry not with you, into your business and your pleasures, a sense of his presence, a reverential fear of offending him, a grateful desire to please and glorify him. You feel it not a privilege and a pleasure to approach his throne of grace. Prayer, especially secret prayer, is much neglected; or if attempted, it is performed rather as a duty than a privilege—rather to discharge a debt, than to draw down a blessing. God does not appear to you glorious, because he is holy and just and hateth iniquity. Your hearts feel not the wonders of his love in the gift of his blessed Son, to save your souls alive. Your chief delights and expectations are from this world; your heart and treasure are not in heaven, because God is there. Some pleasing prospects in life have given you more interest, than you ever derived from the hope of securing the friendship of God and the kingdom of heaven.—God perceives the idols that occupy your hearts. He knows that you fear worldly loss and shame more than his displeasure and his wrath; and that you prefer the vanities of this life, the pleasures of sin, and the good opinion of the world, to the favor and grace of God, to the comforts of religion and to the hope of glory. Brethren can you deny, that I have described your case, (I except here the

heavenly minded follower of Jesus, but none else.) Then let conscience speak : does it say, that you have kept this law ? Or is not its verdict this : you have not loved the Lord your God with all your heart.

Submit my brethren to the charge. Let this law be your "schoolmaster to bring you to Christ." Oh, be thankful that there is a virtue in his blood to atone for all your past impiety and ingratitude to God. In the language of your church, cry to him to have mercy upon you for all your practical atheism and idolatry ; and implore his Holy Spirit, by "directing your hearts into the love of God," to incline you to keep this law.

Let me now turn to that class of my hearers, who have been convinced of their sinfulness under this law, -and who have happily found refuge from its condemning power in the arms of a redeeming Saviour.

My brethren, this commandment requires and implies the residence of a principle within us, which forms the soul to a cheerful and devoted obedience to God ; a principle which gives to the highest archangel his disposition and his power to delight in the praise and service of Jehovah. It is important that you should be aware of the best means of preserving this principle in vigorous exercise.

Happily in your own views and experience, if properly applied, you have every thing necessary for producing such an effect. The great source and support of genuine, efficacious love to God within us, must ever be a lively apprehension both of his excellencies, and also of his love to us in Christ.—They who cannot contemplate and approach him as a reconciled God in Christ, cannot love him. As a God of wisdom, power and holiness, he may be revered, as a God of justice he may be dreaded; but it is only as a Father of love and mercy in Christ, that he can be loved. When he is seen powerfully, by the appropriating eye of faith, in the wonders of Christ's incarnation and redemption;—in his preventing, renewing and preserving grace;—in his pardoning mercy;—in the promises of his word, and the kindness of his providence; the adoring believer cannot but love. A soul redeemed from hell by the blood of Christ; called and converted by free grace; blest with daily admission to God on his mercy seat; strengthened, kept and comforted through his mortal pilgrimage, and animated with the promise of eternal glory, cannot but love. And if we love God, we shall love his perfections, his commandments, his service, his worship and his people; we shall give him our hearts, and

take him for our portion, in time and in eternity. Other lords, that have had dominion over us, shall usurp our affections no more. We shall watch against all encroachments from worldly idols ; and to the glory of our God and Saviour will be cheerfully devoted our faculties and services of body and mind. Think then much and frequently of the love of God in Christ. Keep the eye of your mind ever fixed upon it ; and under the influence of this view, through his grace, you will be enabled to shew that you have no other gods but him, that he is the God you love and serve, and hope to enjoy in everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ your Lord.

SERMON III.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 4—7.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth : Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them : for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me ; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

THE First Commandment shews *who* is the proper object of worship ; the second, *how* he is to be worshipped. The first forbids our having any false God ; this forbids all false worship, either of the true or any imaginary God. The first declares, that except a supreme love for God possess the heart, all forms and acts of worship are vain ; this instructs us how that

love, implanted in the heart by the spirit of God, must display itself in our religious approaches to him. We will,

I. Consider the sins condemned, and consequently the duties enjoined by this commandment:

II. The sanctions under which this law is given.

I. We may break this Commandment, with respect either to the *matter* or *manner* of worship.

The *matter* of worship is clearly determined in the Scriptures, non-essential and circumstantial things excepted, respecting which different opinions and practices have prevailed in different ages, countries and denominations of Christians. But in the essential constituents of divine worship itself, God has positively decided, and we must implicitly obey. We must not omit in his service any thing which he has commanded, nor introduce any thing which he has forbidden. There must, then, be no *image* of the Lord our God. As he is a spirit, no bodily figure can represent *him*, whom no man hath seen, or can see, with the eye of sense. Any image of Jehovah is an abomination to him. To such degrading conceptions of his essence as assigned to him shape and bodily

substance, may, doubtless, be ascribed all those gross systems of idolatry which have disgraced the understandings, and corrupted the hearts of the heathen world. Nor must we make any religious use of the image of any being, either of the Lord Jesus Christ, or of angels, or saints now in heaven above, or of any creature here on the earth below, or in the waters in the sea beneath the earth. It might seem a reflection on the reason and common sense of mankind, to suppose some of these injunctions to be necessary. But our all-seeing God well knew that there would scarcely be an animal, however insignificant or loathsome, which would not become the object of adoration to some or other of the benighted heathen. But is not the christian world innocent of all offences against this Commandment? Far otherwise. Images are employed in christian worship, in sinful defiance of this express prohibition. If we make and use an image, for religious purposes, of our blessed Redeemer, we greatly err. A statue or painting of *Jesus Christ* crowned with thorns, hanging on the cross, or ascending to his glory, may be very affecting, and even instructive, as, through the medium of our senses, it may convey to our minds a more vivid impression of those interesting

scenes. But no image of Christ's human body, (which is all that can be given by the artist), can convey to us any adequate idea of Him, as the mighty God, the everlasting Son of the Father; it cannot, therefore, assist, but must depress and corrupt our conceptions of Him, "who is the image of the invisible God, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily." Of him we must conceive as now in his glory, the "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" inhabiting a spiritual and glorious body; and therefore incapable of being represented to us by any *similitude*, either as God or man.—Images of *Angels*, and *Saints* are not to be used in divine worship at all—for this plain reason, that neither angels nor departed men can avail us in our approaches to God.—God may employ angels or departed saints as ministering spirits to individuals; but to ask them to assist us, in our applications to the throne of grace, is equally sinful and absurd. It is sinful, for there is but one, and he an all-sufficient "Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus:" "No man cometh to the Father but by him," and "whosoever cometh unto God by him shall in no wise be cast out."—To ask the Virgin Mary or St. Peter to intercede with him, is to ascribe to them more love and pity for us, than to him,

whose "love for us was stronger than death."—It is also most absurd ; for how can Mary or Peter know the hearts and desires and prayers of millions of human beings, who might be invoking them at the same moment.—Any act of worship paid before any image, and addressed to any creature, is rank and abominable idolatry, if this commandment has any meaning. And yet, Oh, the blindness and depravity of man ! for fourteen hundred years, in the church of Rome, veneration has been paid to images, and to the persons whom they represent ; and Mary has been more invoked and trusted in as Mediator, than the Son of God himself.—Was ever delusion like this ! The second commandment stood obstinately in the way of such a practice. No ingenuity could explain it away. The only expedient left, was to expel the second of God's commandments out of the decalogue, and to divide the tenth into two, to make up the number !

This commandment equally forbids our corrupting the worship of God by any unscriptural *doctrine* or *practice*. That must, therefore, be pronounced a corrupt church, which, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, and thereby making the word of God of no effect," places its traditions, which

it can trace to no satisfactory source, not by the side, but over the head of divine revelation; which not only invokes saints in prayer, but asks for mercy through their merits; which makes a merit of fasts, penances and pilgrimages, putting them in the place of the atonement and righteousness of Christ; which sells for a sum of money, a plenary indulgence,—a full pardon of all sins past, present and future; and whose priests, if sufficiently paid, will undertake to unlock the gates of their imaginary purgatory, by praying out your soul, or that of your friend, before the time. My brethren, who, that knows his bible, can hesitate for a moment, whether this is the church which bears inscribed on its forehead: "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of abominations in the earth." And what protestant, reflecting on such corruptions, does not adore the providence of God, for the blessed light and liberty of the reformation, which we enjoy.

But is there no way in which we favoured protestants are in danger of breaking this commandment? In order to worship God aright, we must have correct views of his perfections and character. There may be spiritual as well as material idolatry—ideal as well as graven images of God. If we flatter ourselves that

God will not, as he has threatened, "turn the wicked into hell, and all the people that forget him;" if we hope that he will be merciful to our sins, though we continue in them, trample on the atoning blood of Christ, and do despite unto the Spirit of Grace, ours is not the gospel of the bible; we believe in a false god, a god without holiness and justice, a good natured idol of mere mercy. On the other hand, when, by his convincing Spirit, we are humbled and bowed down with a load of sin and guilt, and anxious for the pardon and salvation of our souls, if in defiance of the proof of his love, which Christ displays on the cross, and in disbelief of all his promises and assurances, we discredit his readiness, nay his anxiety to receive and save us, we believe not in the Lord Jehovah, "whose mercy endureth for ever," but in a Baal or a Moloch.

In various other points, the honour of God suffers, and this law is broken, with respect to the *matter* of the worship required. When the ministers of God's sanctuary withhold, garble and corrupt the gospel of Christ—when we wrest the scriptures from their plain, obvious meaning,—when we omit or forbid what God has appointed and commanded in his worship, as well as when we insert what the Scrip-

tures do not authorize, we transgress this law. Here again the Church of Rome egregiously errs, which does not, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, administer to the people the wine as well as the bread; which allows them not the free use of the Holy Scriptures, and which performs its public liturgy in an unknown tongue. Lastly, under this head, we break this law, when we neglect any established and important part of God's worship, such as hearing, reading and digesting the word; the Lord's supper; family and secret prayer, and the instruction of our household.

II. But this commandment may be violated, not only with respect to the *matter* of worship, but also by the *manner* in which it is *performed*. This law denounces its condemnation on all superstition, hypocrisy and cold formality; requiring, that God, who is an heart-searching spirit, be "worshipped in spirit and in truth." Let that man, then, dread the sentence of this law, who, even in the most solemn acts of public worship in which he is expected to take a part, declares, by the silence of his lips, the vacancy of his countenance, and his wandering eye, that he has no sense of the weighty concerns of his soul upon his heart; no business to transact with God; no blessing to ask, no praise

to offer. Nor let *him* judge better of his state, who honors God with his lips, while his mind is unengaged, and “his heart far from him.” Nor he who presents himself before God in a spirit of self-approving complacency, as if he did God service by coming, and might make a merit of his attendance. Brethren, the importance of this part of our subject requires me to go into it still more particularly, especially as it respects the use and abuse of prayer, hearing, and the sacraments.—We may sin against this commandment in many ways, by the abuse of *prayer*. When prayers uttered by our lips issue not from the heart—when we neglect proper opportunities and seasons for prayer—when we allow ourselves in things which unfit us for prayer—when we are only, or chiefly anxious for temporal blessings in our supplications—when we do not approach God as unworthy sinners, trusting only in the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ—when we make confessions of sin and of sorrow for sin, which we do not feel; implore, in the fervent language of our church, the mercy and forgiveness which we scarcely desire;—ask for the Holy Spirit to deliver us from sins, which we do not yet intend to forsake; and when we express resolutions of leading a new and godly life, which we do not mean to fulfil.

Equally numerous and sinful may be the abuses of *hearing*. When we enter the house of God with minds full of worldly thoughts, and without previous prayer for the hearing ear, and the humble, serious, teachable, understanding heart; when we bring with us a prejudice against the minister, or the doctrines of truth, which the Lord has commanded him, at his peril, to deliver; when, while the most momentous subjects, which involve the eternal interests of our souls, are sounding in our ears, we sit with less attention, interest and feeling, than we should manifest at the recital of a fiction, or the performance of a play;—when we take no pains to understand the preacher;—when we try his doctrines by human opinions, and not by the word of God;—when we hear only to make comparisons, to criticise and to censure;—when we do not look up for the Spirit of God, to write what we have heard upon our hearts;—but plunging into worldly conversation as soon as we are released, dismiss the sermon from our thoughts, and never try to recal it, in all these cases, we sinfully abuse the duty of hearing. “Those by the way side, are they that hear,—then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts.” Why, and with what effect? “Lest they should believe and be saved.”

Lastly, we may sin against this law, by the abuse of the two sacraments. We abuse the sacrament of *Baptism*, when, as parents, or as sponsors in their place, we present our infant children at the font, without a serious recollection of the nature and object of that sacrament, and do not earnestly pray for the thing signified by it, namely, the inward and spiritual grace, to work in the child, "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;" also when we do not instruct our children, on their arriving at the age of understanding and thought, in the nature of the vow and promise made in their name, and in the privileges to which they were thereby introduced.—And we abuse it in our own case, when, according to the vow and covenant made at our own baptism, and solemnly ratified and taken on ourselves at confirmation, we do not renounce the vanities of the world, and the sins of the flesh, nor believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy with God, nor keep his commandments, by faithfully endeavouring to walk in them all the days of our lives. And we abuse the *other sacrament*, not only when we habitually neglect it, as a large majority of my parishioners uniformly do, but also when we eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, with a careless and impenitent

heart ; a heart given up, and intended still to be given up, to the maxims, customs, sins and pleasures of the world—destitute of humility and contrition for sin, of a thankful sense “ of the sacrifice of the death of Christ,” and of spiritual desires to be “ strengthened and refreshed in our souls by his body and blood.”—We abuse it, when we approach the Lord’s table in a proud, self-righteous spirit, as if we came to do our duty, and to place God under obligations to shew us favor ; not as poor sinners, to testify our gratitude to Christ for his dying love, and again to devote ourselves to him, in our bodies and spirits, which are his.—I need not pursue the explanation farther. Enough is surely produced to shew, that this commandment is exceedingly broad. Who does not feel that he is deeply guilty ; and that if God should deal with him according to his sins against this law only, he could never see the kingdom of heaven ? Who, then, is there amongst us, that ought not earnestly to pray : Lord, for Christ’s sake, have mercy upon me ?—My brethren, the subject is a serious one. Slightly as multitudes among us look on sins of irreligion ; of neglect of the worship of God, or abuses in the performance of it, Almighty God has seen fit to enforce this commandment with two powerful sanc-

tions, addressed at once to our fears and hopes. He gives this reason for introducing them : " For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God." Idolatry is a kind of spiritual adultery ; and so is all false and formal worship, where the heart holds not holy intercourse with God.

In the hearts of false worshippers there is an enmity to God's character, and to real holiness ; a withholding of the affections from him. In such cases, God is jealous for his glory, and provoked by the deceit and depravity of such hypocritical pretenders, just as a jealous husband is enraged by the unfaithfulness of his wife.

The threat denounced should make every false worshipper tremble for himself and his offspring: " I visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shew mercy unto thousands in them that love me, and keep my commandments." There is nothing unworthy of a just and holy God, in thus perpetuating on children the effects of the sins and ungodliness of the parent. We see, every day, under the established laws of providence, the son suffering through the intemperance, extravagance, and misconduct of the parent. A careless, ungodly father, will usually train

up his son to tread in his steps; and thus the son makes his father's sins his own, and justifies the wrath of God upon himself. But while God thus manifests his displeasure at those that hate *Him* and his holy service, much more does he rejoice to bless the objects of his favor, who embrace the mercy of the gospel, love God and his worship, and walk in his ways. For he "shews mercy," not unto the third and fourth generation only, but "unto thousands, in them that love him and keep his commandments."

This commandment suggests much matter for profitable reflection.

1. What a humbling view of human weakness, folly and wickedness, is presented in the universal tendency of mankind to idolatry. In every age, among all nations; the most refined, and the most simple; in imperial Rome and in savage Otaheite, have the love, trust and honor, due to the Creator and Lord of all, been prostituted at the feet of idols. Man has prostrated himself before the sun and moon, the beast and the reptile, the stick and the stone, and said "Deliver me, for thou art my God." Nay, even God's own ancient people made a calf in Horeb; even in christian churches, men make images, and bow down to them, and worship before them. Who can

think of this and not confess, that man is utterly depraved, and that the patience and long suffering of God are infinite !

2. How thankful should we be to God, that we are born in a land of pure, reformed christianity. We might have been, this evening, prostrate before the monstrous image of a Hindoo god, or listening to the licentious blasphemies of the Koran ; or, with the misguided members of the Church of Rome, we might have been seeking the forgiveness of our sins, and access to God, by bowing at the image, and entreating the good offices of the Virgin Mary ; by fasting, penances and paternosters, ignorant that salvation comes to us through the " sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ ;" ignorant, that when the broken law of God condemns us, " Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth ;" and that being " justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. That we may perceive the value of our privileges and be led to embrace the free mercy of God in Christ, let us examine ourselves faithfully by this law, and learn something of the extent of our guilt under it. Have we not offended in many things it condemns, and

fallen short in every thing it commands ? Are there not multitudes among us, who hardly ever enter the house of God at all ? Do not many others, who attend public worship, quite neglect the great duty of family prayer and reading the holy scriptures to their children and servants ? Have not some of us been frequently detained from church by any slight cause, which was not a reason, but an excuse ; and which would not have detained us from places which we liked better ? And what spiritually-minded christian in this congregation has not to confess and deplore before God the coldness of his heart, and the distraction of his thoughts, even when engaged in confessing his sins, pleading for mercy, imploring the help of the divine grace, praising him for his glory and his goodness, and hearing his word ? Who can deny, that his sins, defects and omissions, even in his best religious services, might bring down upon him rather the displeasure, than the blessing of God ! Let us then make a proper use of this law ; and while we pray for grace to enable us, henceforward, to worship the Lord in the power of the spirit, and the beauty of holiness, let this law bring us to Christ in deep humility and earnest faith, for pardon of all our transgressions and failures under it.

In conclusion, I must not omit briefly to notice the bearing, which the latter part of this law, has on parents and children.—Careless and irreligious parents, who are content with the form of religion in the house of God, and without the appearance of it in your families, and without its influence on your own hearts and conduct; are you so destitute of affections to your children as to train them up, under your own example, to a dislike and contempt of religion, and to expose them a prey to their passions, and to the temptations that surround them? Do you consider that your fatal influence and misconduct are likely, under the just judgment of God, to affect even distant generations of your descendants in body and soul; in time and in eternity? Could you bear, that your children's children should appear at the judgment seat of Christ, "swift witnesses" against you? Could you endure their groans and curses upon you in endless misery? Oh, then, have pity on your own souls, and on those that should be as dear as your own. Fear your holy jealous God; embrace his great salvation, and become his devout and holy servants; that his blessing, not his vengeance, may rest on you and yours. To you, pious parents, who love the Lord Jesus Christ, his worship

and his ways, and endeavour to “bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” here is a most gracious promise, for your encouragement.—Use your best exertions, as instruments of God, for the good of your children, by mild, but firm discipline, constant instruction, a consistent example, and unceasing prayer ; and so firmly expect the accomplishment of this promise.—You may be disappointed, at least for a time ; and by his carelessness, and even by his viciousness, your child may be “a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.” But continue to hope and pray.—After long disappointment, or even after your praying tongue is silent in the grave, the Lord may remember his promise, and you may meet the dear object of your wishes and your fears in the kingdom of glory.—If the Lord has made your children his own by adoption and grace, so that they have escaped “the corruption that is in the world,” and have their hope in Christ, and their pleasure in worshipping and serving God, you have great reason to be thankful and happy. Having blessed you to them, God may bless them to others through a thousand generations. You will only know on the day of judgment, how far your salutary influence has extended. Some on that day, as

far distant from you, as you are from Paul, and as John from David and Moses, may then rise up and call you blessed.

My young hearers, if unhappily you have parents, who care not for your souls; but by their example would lead you to cast the fear of God and all thoughts of eternity behind you, follow them not. Come out from their ungodly influence, and the curse of this law will not be entailed upon you. It falls only on the children who, like their ungodly parents, hate God and his ways. Love God and he will love you. Give him your heart, and walk before him as a dutiful child, and you will find that "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father," but that "the soul which sinneth" and repenteth not, "shall only die."

If God has favoured you with pious parents, who watch over you, pray for you, and labour for the salvation of your souls, be thankful for the greatness of your privilege, and disappoint them not. If you do, the heaviest curse of heaven will fall upon you, for sinning against so much light, and such love from God and his Christ, and from your earthly parents, as you have experienced. Oh, let the hearts of such parents be gladdened through life, by your

holy, decided conversation in Christ ; and let them be cheered, in the agonies of death, with the confident hope of meeting you in heaven.



SERMON IV.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 7.

*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ;
for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his
name in vain.*

THE law of God is not more comprehensive in its meaning, than connected in its order. The first commandment calls for that principle which lays the foundation of all true religion in the soul, supreme love to God. The second requires a pure and spiritual worship of him. The third, a just respect to him, and reverence for him, in his perfections, character, word and worship.—To impress us the more with the importance of this commandment, which we are so liable to break, the Lord has seen fit to annex an awful threat, sufficient to appal the heart of the stoutest transgressor. “For the

Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.”—By the *name* of God, we are to understand whatever makes his character and will known to us. To take the name of God *in vain*, is to make a profane use of his name, titles, word and ordinances. Viewing the commandment in this its true and proper sense, we shall all find deep cause for penitential humiliation before God, for the blood of atonement to expiate our guilt, and for the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify our hearts, that we may henceforth “perfectly love him, and suitably magnify his name.” Let us now proceed to consider,

The nature, guilt and danger of the sins forbidden by this commandment.—And may the Spirit of God enable me to state them faithfully, and you to hear with attention and profit.

I. The first sin in enormity of guilt, under this commandment, is *perjury*, or taking a false oath. To take an oath, is to perform the most sacred religious appeal to God possible. When necessary and required of us, it is perfectly lawful to take God to witness by oath. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and serve him, and swear by his name.” Our blessed Lord answered, when questioned upon oath; and St. Paul more than once, uses expressions,

which have in them the character and obligation of oaths.—But when we solemnly swear in support of an assertion, which we know to be false, or about which we have not taken all necessary steps for knowing it to be true; this is with different degrees of aggravation, the deadly sin of perjury. The prophet Jeremiah writes: “thou shalt swear in truth, judgment and righteousness:” “in truth;” that is, in support of truth; “in judgment,” that is, with a well founded and decided knowledge of the fact; and “in righteousness,” with an upright intention and pure motive to state the truth as it is. In an oath, we call upon God, so to help us; so to extend to us his mercy and grace, or so to inflict his everlasting curse upon us, as we speak truth or falsehood in his presence. He then that perjures himself, deliberately challenges and entreats God to pour his eternal vengeance on his soul in hell.—In all ages and countries, the sanctity of an oath has been held inviolable, and the perjured wretch abhorred.—And here we may remark, how necessary a religious veneration for Almighty God is, for the well-being, nay, for the very existence of human society. Banish from the mind the fear of God, and the expectation of a “judgment to come;” persuade mankind that death is an eter-

nal sleep, that there is no punishment for perjury in hell, and the bands of social life would be dissolved; laws would cease to operate; no evidence in a court of justice could be depended upon; no man would be secure in his character, his property, or his life.

Most of us are seldom called upon to take an oath; but vows being of the nature of oaths there is one vow in which we are all deeply concerned. The promises made at our baptism, are solemn obligations, in which we vowed to renounce the service of the devil, the love of the world, and the lust of the flesh; to believe the precious truths of the gospel; especially to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for our pardon and justification; and by the help of God's Holy Spirit, to keep his commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our lives. These were not common place declarations of our sponsors in our name, to be repeated as a catechism in our childhood, and then to be lost from our memory and contradicted in our practice. At our confirmation, we, in our own persons, before God and the church, bound ourselves by a ratification of those vows, and made a solemn covenant with God, that we would by his grace, keep them through our lives.—Then, brethren, our vows are upon us,

at this day; and by every appearance in the house of God, by every act of public worship, we, in effect, declare to God that we adhere to them still. If, then, any of us are still living in sin; in pride, in covetousness, in sensuality—still ensnared by the pomps, vanities, dissipations, customs and maxims of the world—still without the godly sorrow of true repentance—without a true and justifying faith in Christ—without the love and fear of God upon our hearts; we are living in the cool, deliberate breach of our baptismal vow, and daily adding perjury to rebellion. So far is baptism from being a privilege and a blessing to false christians, it will, by their hypocritical abuse of it, be turned into a curse, and will aggravate their condemnation; for not only vain, but dangerous and destructive is the mere “outward visible sign,” to those who seek not, but scorn “the inward spiritual grace.”—Let us not forget here also to observe, that whatever resolutions, promises and purposes we have made, in sickness and sorrow, or under alarm and distress of conscience, as they were seriously made in the presence of God, they partake of the nature and obligations of *vows*; and when forgotten and abandoned by us, bring us under the sin of taking God’s name in vain.

II. This Commandment is broken in a most direct, outrageous and insulting manner, by *prophane swearing*. Sinners of this awful class, I do not expect to be here ; but there may be children and young persons present, whose minds ought to be impressed with a horror of this vice. Of prophane swearing there are three kinds. First, when a man rashly, and without just cause, calls God to witness by an oath, even when he speaks the truth. There are prophane persons, who cannot assert the most trivial matter, without swearing by the dread name of God, that it is so. Had these men any fear of God upon their hearts, any belief in his word and in the day of judgment, they would remember to their confusion, that they are soon to stand before him, who has said, “ Swear not at all ; but let your conversation be, “ yea, yea ; nay, nay ; ” a simple affirmation or denial ; “ for whatsoever is more than that, cometh of the evil one.” So far from gaining credit, by appealing to God in an oath for the truth of every trifle they utter, every virtuous mind will doubt their veracity, and detest their conversation, in proportion to the wanton prophaneness with which it is larded ; for who is so likely to be a liar to man, as the abuser of the name and majesty of his God !—

A second species of prophane swearing occurs, when God's name is used *falsely* in conversation ; when appeal is made to God, in support of a lie. It might well be asked, is such a case possible ? Is there a wretch so audacious, so impious, as to presume to appeal to the most high God, in whose presence he is, and who can strike him with death in a moment, when he swears that he will do what he never means to do ; or that has done, what he has not done ; or that an assertion is true, which he does not know to be true, or knows to be false ! In all the list of crimes, which try the patience, and provoke the vengeance of Almighty God, I know not one which so clearly decides the sinner to be in reality a hardened infidel as this ; and yet, alas ! how common !—The *third* kind of prophane swearing is, that of imprecations and curses ; when a man expressly, or conditionally, calls down the curse of God on himself or another. Who could believe, did he not hear for himself, that the spirit of the devil should ever so completely occupy the heart of a man, who has been baptized into the faith of Christ, and calls himself a christian, that he should find his pleasure in sporting with the majesty, justice and vengeance of God, by wishing his soul in hell, or by dealing out God's

damnation upon those around him on every slight occasion, or by employing other similar prophane language? Of all the depravities into which the corruption of man's heart can sink him, none is so mean, so impertinently wicked, so destitute of excuse as prophane swearing. It is at once an act of unprovoked insolence against God, and an offence against decency and decorum in society. It degrades *any* person, from the nobleman to the beggar, into a contemptible, offensive nuisance, fit only to herd with ruffians on earth, and with blaspheming fiends in hell. Other vices may offer some plea, on the score of temptation. If a man assaults another, he has been provoked to anger; if he steals, he is urged by want; but the prophane has no temptation, beyond the vice itself. He sins for the pleasure of sinning. He insults God without temptation, and without advantage. "His delight is in cursing and it shall happen unto him; it shall come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones." How prepared is such a man to join the wretched spirits in the prison of hell, which gnaw their tongues with pain, blaspheme the name of God in malignant despair, and through eternity pour forth their curses on their corrupting companions who have brought them into that place of torment.

I have thus far confined my observations to prophane swearing, in its gross and unqualified enormity. But there is a more refined and measured way of taking God's name in vain, the evil of which, by its obtaining among persons of respectability, and even sometimes among the guardians of decency and virtue, the female sex, seems to be very little felt; and that is, when expressions are employed in the form of exclamations or wishes, in which the name of God is used with irreverence; or when a sort of oath is employed in appeal to some other name or being. How common the expressions: "O Lord;" "O God;" "By the heavens;" "Upon my honor;" "Upon my soul!" How often does the tongue exclaim, "Good God," when no sense of his goodness is felt in the heart! How often is he called on to have mercy, or to bless, when his mercy or his grace are of all things the least desired.—And here I must not suppress an obvious remark, that the impious and prophane use of God's name, so common on the stage, must be disgustingly offensive to the ears of those who have any religious reverence for God, and must contribute much to blunt the sense of moral feeling in the public mind, and to debase the standard of correct conversation. From the same unholy

origin, and of the same polluting tendency are prophane songs, jests and stories. A large portion of the novels and the poetry which are in wide circulation, even among the lower orders of society, in this reading age, by corrupting the principles and inflaming the passions, and rooting from the heart religious feeling and the fear of God, is charged with more subtle and mischievous poison than the works of the infidel, and should be carefully banished from our parlours, nurseries and kitchens. What man, on the day of judgment, would envy the responsibility, not only of a Voltaire and a Paine, but also of a Moore and a Byron!

III. But we proceed to violations of this law, into which *we are all* liable to fall, and which we have *all* much committed. The worship of Almighty God, is the most solemn act in which a human being can be engaged. He comes into the immediate presence of the holy, heart-searching Lord of all things. His professed object is, to have spiritual intercourse with that glorious being; to intreat him in prayer, to honour him with praise, and to receive edification and comfort from his holy word.—With what seriousness, then, and sincerity and humility, and fervency of feeling should we always take a part in such avowed

approaches to God ! And what can equal the insolence and the insult, the hypocrisy, I may say the atheism, of a mere formal attendance on the word and worship of God. I hardly know whether the conduct of the daring despiser of God's house and ordinances, or the unengaged trifler there, is more profane and wicked and provoking to God.—And yet, my brethren, have not all we, who habitually assemble here, sinned much and greatly against the Lord, by our carelessness, indifference and formality in his worship. In the most serious solemn parts of the public service, have we not been there, rather as indifferent spectators, than devout worshippers ? Have we not often refused to join our fellow-sinners, either with heart or voice, in confessing our sins, declaring our belief, praying to God, through Christ, for his pardoning mercy, and his renewing spirit, and in adoring him for his glory and his goodness ? When our lips did utter or ought to have been uttering the most momentous applications to the God of heaven, have not our eyes and thoughts been allowed to wander after any trifle that presented itself ? Have we not made confessions of sin for which we were not humbled and ashamed ; asked for mercy and grace without desiring or looking for

either; and expressed language of acknowledgment and praise, without the slightest feeling of gratitude and thankfulness? Have we not sat under the word preached, without attention, without self-application, as if it were the invention of man, not the word of God; and often, when the truths we have heard have fastened themselves with resistless conviction on our consciences, have we not left the house of God, resolved to continue to act in determined defiance of our convictions? Does not many a painful instance, even in this most attentive congregation, continually present itself, of individuals, who by their irreverent and indevout behaviour, even in the most solemn part of our service, *the prayers*, too distinctly proclaim, that their hearts are not engaged? They prove that either the presence of God is not felt, or that his favour is not desired, nor his displeasure feared: that they are shut up, either in proud unbelief, or in desperate hardness of heart.—The advanced state of our time compels me briefly to observe, that this commandment is further broken, and God's name taken in vain, when we hold any false unscriptural doctrine—when we neglect or prophane receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, without humility of heart, without

faith in Christ, and without a sincere intention to lead a new life ;—when we neglect family worship and secret prayer ; when we do not read the scriptures at home, with seriousness, attention and prayer ;—when we treat the word of God irreverently, not only by exercising prophane wit and ridicule upon it, but by jesting with it, and by speaking in its language, on ordinary subjects ;—and also when we adopt any insincere and unmeaning modes of speech ; when we utter compliments and professions which we do not believe and feel ; for we speak them, knowing them to be false and affected, in the presence of that God, who reads the heart, and requireth truth in the inward parts, and so take the name of the God of truth in vain, Brethren, if the long list of sins against this commandment is awful and alarming, it becomes still more so by God's threatening annexed to them, which establishes the guilt and danger of committing them : “ The Lord will not hold them guiltless.” It is a form of expression which implies that he holds the transgressor as *very guilty*, his sin as very great ; and no wonder ; for sins against this law are committed directly against the majesty and honor of God, generally with deliberation, and frequently without temptation

to sin. If then, upon any species of sins, certainly upon these, if not forsaken and pardoned in this life, the heaviest wrath of God will eternally fall.—Then, let us each look back on his past conduct, and learn his sinfulness and his need of mercy. Could I imagine that any accident had brought within these walls, one that is abandoned to perjury, or prophane cursing and swearing, I would affectionately warn him, that every oath is recorded in the book of heaven, and that against it is written the curse of this law on his soul, for his insolent blasphemy against the divine name and government.—I would beseech him to consider that, by such audacious impiety, he is every day wantonly aggravating his guilt, and sealing his condemnation afresh. On the other hand, to save the alarmed penitent from despair, I would confidently assure him, on divine authority, that there is virtue in the blood of Jesus, to expiate the guilt of his foulest blasphemy, and a power in the Holy Spirit to give him a new heart, and pure lips ; to change his oaths into prayers, and his curses into praises, so that his tongue now set on fire of hell, may be formed to the holy hallelujahs of heaven.

But if by the restraining grace of God, we have been preserved from impious prophanness, and from perjury, let us not congratulate ourselves as therefore necessarily free from guilt and danger. Have we forgotten, and cast off our baptismal vow and other subsequent engagements and professions? Have we shewn a taste and not a loathing for conversation, books and amusements, which teemed with expressions of licentious profaneness, calculated to stifle in our hearts all pious feeling of reverence for God? Have we heard God's name taken in vain, with more patience than we should have endured a religious exercise, or a spiritual conversation? Has a larger share of gratification being expected from a novel, than from the bible; from a play, than from a sermon? And has the card table given us an interest which we sought not, nor expected at the table of the Lord? Then can we be guiltless, under this law!—And who can recollect the unholy and irreverent expressions, that have issued from his lips through the several years of his life?—Who can recount the times, when he has attended the house of God without thought or feeling; has not condescended to worship God even with his lips, or has worshipped with his lips, when his heart felt and meant nothing?—Who among us can

has always heard the word of God, with an humble, teachable, attentive mind, and received it with pure affection? Who can now remember, even at those times, when he meant to be serious, and wished to have communion with God, all his wanderings of thought, his coldness of affection, and his deadness and distraction of spirit? Who among us, then, is clear with God? Rather, whose offences against this single commandment are not "more in number than the hairs of his head?" Who then will fondly presume, that he can stand before God in his own righteousness? Must not every mouth be stopped, and all plead guilty, deeply guilty before God?

We are now prepared to perceive, "wherefore serveth this law," and what is the use, which the *unhumbled*, the *penitent*, and the *pardoned child of God*, should severally make of it—

To the first, the *unhumbled*, this law demonstrates the utter depravity of the heart of fallen man, and his need of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify it. Why this universal propensity, which all the careless shew, and all the serious confess and deplore, to take God's name in vain, if not by wicked profaneness, yet by formality, by lip service, by an inward aversion from the spiritual worship of God? Do angels feel any

thing of this? Ought it not, at all times, to be our highest delight—the source of our sweetest enjoyments, to draw near to God with our hearts, and to have his praise continually on our lips? Then let the coldness, the formality, the deadness, the disinclination which you feel under the means of grace, prove to you, that your heart is “far gone from original righteousness,” and excite you to pray frequently for the Holy Spirit, to “create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you.”

2. What use are ye to make of this law, who, while we have been tracing it in its extent and bearings, are convinced that your sins against it have brought the sentence of this law upon your souls. My dear brethren, take the Apostle's advice. “Let it be your schoolmaster to bring you to Christ.” If by the law you have, through the Holy Spirit, been convicted of sin, it is at the foot of the cross only, that you can lay down your burthen, and derive peace of conscience and hope towards God. Trust, then, in him, who has “redeemed you from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for you,” and you will “be made the righteousness of God in him,” and be no longer subject to the sentence of the law.

Lastly, I scarcely need to point out to *you*, who, by faith in Christ, have obtained mercy, the use you are to make of this law. If the Holy Spirit has blest you with pardon and peace in believing, he has also "shed abroad the love of God in your hearts." If so, though from this or from any other law, "there is no condemnation" for you, yet by it, and all the rest, you will delight to walk, as a beloved rule of holy life.—Though frequently harrassed, and humbled, and distressed, by a cold, unbelieving and wandering heart, it will be the richest feast of your soul to have communion with God in his ordinances, and to "worship him in spirit and in truth." And, my brethren, be it your effort, within your proper sphere of influence, to suppress profaneness and impiety. Check it in your servants and dependents. Teach them to know and love the Saviour's name. Train them, on earth, to understand and adore his dying love; that in heaven they may join you, without weariness of spirit and distraction of thought, in ascribing honor and glory, thanksgiving and praise to God and to the Lamb for evermore.

SERMON V.
THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 8.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

THE word sabbath means rest. The sabbath day is intended to be a day of *holy rest*; a cessation from worldly occupation, in order to attend to religious duties; a day to be devoted to the worship of God, and the business of the soul. The holy scriptures refer its institution to the creation. God having rested from all his work which he had made, concluding with the formation of man, blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. The right observance of it is so essentially connected with the honor of God, the knowledge and practice of true religion, and the comfort of man and beast; that God has seen fit to place it, though in strictness, but a

positive, ceremonial institution, among the other nine commandments in the decalogue, which are of moral and unalterable obligation. When we consider how superior in importance eternity is to time, and the welfare of the soul to that of the body, we can only account for six days being allotted to the business of the latter, and one day to that of the former, by concluding, that every day is to have its portion of religious intercourse with God; that our worldly affairs are to be conducted on religious principles, and in the fear and to the glory of God; and also that the sabbath should be fully and conscientiously devoted to religious purposes. I shall

I. Explain, what is implied in keeping the sabbath day holy :

II. Produce some reasons for so keeping it.

I. What is implied in keeping the sabbath day holy.

1. The first and most obvious duty in sanctifying the sabbath, is to abstain from worldly business. "Thou shalt do no manner of work in it." Such express and unqualified language, if taken in its strict and literal sense, would forbid every bodily exertion whatever. It might seem not to allow a man to lead his ox or his ass to water, or even to prepare his food, or to wash his face. But this law is of a character

somewhat different from the rest. They being purely moral, and containing the immutable standard of eternal truth and holiness, can allow of no departure from their full demands. Every transgression of every other law is sin, and its wages death. But this law being, in a considerable degree, ceremonial, and in the strictness of its letter, requiring what is neither expedient, nor possible, exactly to perform, allowances are made. God loves mercy and not sacrifice: The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.—Other parts of God's word, therefore, qualify the rigour of this law, and declare, that works of real necessity, and of mercy and charity, not only may, but ought to be done. Necessary provisions for a family may be prepared; an ox fallen into a pit may be drawn out, and the sick may be visited, the poor relieved, and the ignorant instructed, on the sabbath day. But, while these allowances are made, it must be remembered that any act which comes not fairly under the head of necessity, mercy or charity, is a violation of the fourth commandment, a pollution of the sabbath. No unnecessary work, no work which might be done before, or may be done after the sabbath, can be guiltless. And let it be distinctly understood, that by *work*, is meant not only any solid and essential part of the labour of a

man's occupation and calling, but any matter connected with them. If it is sinful for a tradesman to buy or sell on that sacred day, it is also sinful for him to settle his accounts, travel, or converse and write letters on business, except in cases of urgent and unavoidable necessity.—Nay still more is required of the christian, than a mere cessation from actual work in his worldly concerns. The law is spiritual and prescribes to the heart. With God, the heart is the seat and index of character. If the heart is busy, the whole man is busy. If our thoughts and cares are employed in our worldly affairs, we offend God as much as if our hands were labouring. The *soul* must rest *from* work, that it may rest *in* God.—It must ascend the mount on the wings of holy contemplation, and heavenly affections ; and earthly feeling and care must be left at the foot of the hill.

Nor, however we may personally relinquish secular business and temporal cares, are we free from guilt, if our household, servants and dependents be occupied, by our permission or order, in unnecessary work, and thereby detained from the public and private worship of God. If *we* are to rest, and keep the day holy, so is "our son, daughter, man-servant, maid-servant ;" and even our cattle must partake of the rest and refreshment of that day.

2. The character, privileges and duties of the sabbath require of us to abstain, on that day, from indulgence in sloth, sensuality and worldly pleasure; and from all amusements and recreation of body and mind, which are inconsistent with holy and devout affections, and with spiritual communion with God, even from such as, in other respects, and at other times, might appear innocent and allowable. Nothing can betray such ignorance of the character of God, of the nature of true religion, and of the real interests and happiness of the soul, as to restrict the requirements of this law, to a mere abstinence from manual labour. Were it so, a large proportion of the community in the higher ranks of life, would be placed altogether beyond the reach of this commandment; having been raised by a bountiful providence, above the necessity of attending to business of any kind. The sabbath was ordained and sanctified for the worship of God, and the benefit of the soul. But there is not a more deadly poison to real seriousness and spirituality of mind, (in which all true religion and acceptable worship consist,) than worldly pleasure and sensual indulgence. A heavenly-minded follower of his Saviour may carry with him the love and fear of God into his weekly occupations; may do all he does to

the glory of God, and may expect preservation, and a blessing from him. But they who waste their precious sabbath hours in worldly thoughts, readings and conversation ; in excursions, visits, convivialities, and the indulgence of their appetites, profane the Lord's day, and injure their souls more than the man, who should, on that day, plough his field, or reap his corn. Hear how the Lord speaks by his prophet: " If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day ; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable ; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words ; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father ; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Here we are clearly taught, that our sabbath pastimes and delights are not to be fetched from earthly, but heavenly sources ; not to be taken in the gratification of an unsanctified heart, but in holy intercourse with God ; and hence it follows, that we profane spiritual things, whenever we do not seek spiritual benefit and enjoyment from them. *Sacred music* if employed by us, on this day, not for the purpose of exciting and expressing devout affections, but merely for the gratifica-

tion of the ear, is not sacred to us, but profane. And attendance on a preacher, not because he searches and edifies us; but because he pleases us by his manner, style or elocution, is in us an act of just as much piety and profit, and no more, as attendance on an agreeable actor upon the stage.—Then only, in the strict and proper sense of the word, do we keep the sabbath holy, when we spend it with God, worshipping him at once with our lips and hearts, in spirit and in truth. What more melancholy proof can be given of the depravity of our fallen nature, and of the aversion of our affections from God and purity, than the backwardness and indisposition, which men feel to spend their sabbaths thus. To enjoy the worship of God, is the highest bliss of angels and perfected spirits in heaven, and should be ours. Is there any necessity for giving to the anxious, industrious poor man, such a caution as this: “Do not allot more than one day in seven to the business of thy soul; through the other six days, work diligently for the support of thyself and family?” And yet in a sense are we not all poor? Do we not need to ask continual pardon and mercy for our daily sins, through Christ Jesus; do we not want the perpetual influences of the Holy Spirit to subdue our corruptions, help our infirmities,

and fit us for holy and cheerful obedience to the divine will ; to enlighten the darkness, and dissipate the doubts of our souls, and to enrich us with heavenly peace, consolation and hope ? Surely then, if these wants of the soul were felt, as we feel those of the body ; if we hungered for the bread of life, as we do for daily food, we should rejoice at the privilege of returning sabbaths, as days of holy rest and refreshment. Our souls, like David's, would "long, yea faint, for the courts of the Lord, our heart and our flesh would cry out for the living God." We should choose to be even doorkeepers in the house of the Lord, rather than dwell, especially on the Lord's day, in the tents of wickedness, and in the society of irreligious men. We should not be disposed to exclaim, "when will these heavy religious duties be over"—"when will this long, dull sabbath be gone ?" That would be found the shortest, sweetest of our days, in which, when elevated in faith and holy aspiration, we could rise above the gross atmosphere of this world, to breathe sweet foretastes of that eternal sabbatic bliss, which awaits the people of God in his glorious presence. It would be far from our taste and practice, to appear at church, and then to give up the rest of the day to the indulgence of a worldly heart ; the day would

be begun, continued and ended with God; God would be honoured in every part of the day; at least, forgotten, offended, dishonoured in none.

II. Various reasons concur for our keeping the sabbath thus holy; a few I shall specify.

1. The first and strongest reason of all is, that the Lord God has commanded it, and enjoined it upon us, in his law.

2. He sanctioned it by his own example; on that day, he rested from his work, as Creator, and blessed and sanctified it.

3. On that day, we are bound to worship and glorify our God and Saviour, from motives of gratitude for redeeming mercy. God said to the Israelites, when he had given them this law; "Remember that thou wast a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day."—With how much greater force should the injunction be felt by us: "Remember Christian, thou wast a slave of sin and satan, shut up in the bondage of corruption, condemnation and death, but the Lord thy Redeemer, brought thee out by the blood of his cross, and by the outstretched arm of his spirit; therefore

he commands thee to keep the sabbath day, that he may be glorified, and thou mayest be blessed.”—The experience of all ages testifies the necessity, importance and happy effects of sanctifying the sabbath. The state of religion in individuals and churches, may be estimated by the manner in which the sabbath is kept. The Lord calls it a *sign* between him, and his professing people. When religiously and spiritually sanctified, it is a sign that he loves and dwells in them, and that they love and are blessed of him. Speaking by Ezekiel, of the particular mercies bestowed on the Jews, he ranks this among the first : “I gave them my sabbaths.” When describing that people as sunk in iniquity, and ripe for his judicial vengeance, he produces, as the blackest and most destructive of their crimes : “they have polluted my sabbaths.” When a neighbouring country, above thirty years ago, in the frenzy of its impiety, undertook to banish the gospel and faith of Jesus Christ from their land, they abolished the sabbath, and their work was done.

So few are disposed to read and study the word of God for themselves, and to think seriously on the things which belong to their eternal peace; and so few in early life receive

from their parents solid religious instruction, that was it not for what is learned at church on the Lord's day, the very knowledge and profession of the Gospel would be in a great measure lost from among us ; with the bible in our houses, we should become very Heathens.—Nor is the advantage of Sunday-privileges confined to the ignorant and unconverted. The spiritual minded Christian will tell you, that the sabbath is a welcome and necessary day to him. It often finds his mind cold, dark and secularized by worldly cares and temptations which have beset him through the week ; and he flees to its reviving ordinances, as the hart to the water-brook, the hungry to his food, and the weary to his rest. There he waits on the Lord, and renews his strength ; and thus is prepared to meet the trials, and discharge the duties of the week, and to pursue his heavenly way towards the sabbath of eternal and unwearied worship, in the presence of God, and of the Lamb.

But if this is to keep the sabbath day holy ; and if the right observance of it rests upon reasons so strong, and is attended by benefits so great, it becomes most important to enquire whether it is thus sanctified among us. Look first at the circles of the great, the wealthy and the gay, A large proportion of these scarcely

appear in the house of God at all, having, however, no excuse to offer for their conduct, but that "they will not come." The day is passed by them in pleasure and self-indulgence : in reading the newspapers, or books of entertainment ; in frivolous conversation ; in the luxuries of the table ; in dissipating visits ; in travelling ; no portion of the day being devoted to serious reflection, to self-examination, to study of the scriptures and communion with God in prayer.—Observe next the men of business. Sunday is with them the day of recreation. The concerns of the body having so entirely engaged and confined them through the six days of the week, the soul is required to resign its claims upon the seventh. The body must be recruited at the expense of the health and salvation of the soul. Is an excursion to be taken, or a visit to be paid or received, Sunday is the only day that can be spared ; Sunday therefore is seized upon.—Through the awfully increasing profanation of the Lord's day, in the higher walks of life, the infection is insinuating itself into families that once manifested some reverence for God, some respect for religion. These, if they have been once at church, seem to imagine that, by such a competent share of devotion, they have

purchased the privilege of placing the rest of the day at their own disposal. Hence has crept in the baneful practice of Sunday dinner and evening parties, to the injury and the shame of every family that enters into them. Where they prevail, religion languishes and dies. In such parties, nothing of a religious and sacred nature can be expected to pass. Conversation will be just of the worldly character, which you would expect on any other day. On such polluted sabbaths there is no family reading; no instruction given to children and servants; no opportunity of private retirement for meditation and reading and prayer. But, masters and mistresses, who thus offend, this is not all, which Almighty God will bring in charge against you. Your man and maid servants are commanded to rest from all, except absolutely necessary labour on this day, that they may attend to the business of their souls. But you employ them unnecessarily; you detain them from the house of God, when you ought not; when you need not, you compel them to break this commandment along with yourselves. If then they die in ignorance and impenitence, through your cruel and unlawful detention of them from the means of grace and instruction, their blood will God require at your hands.

If we take a more general view of the way in which the sabbath is spent among us, there is much to distress and alarm us.—Among the labouring classes, and the very poor, perhaps not one in ten uses any part of Sunday as a sabbath for his soul. Morning is wasted in sleep and indolence after the fatigues of the week. In the afternoon and evening, the shoals that pour forth from our gates, and the parties that revel in our public houses, give more the appearance of a fair, than a sabbath ; of a day dedicated to sin and to pleasure, than to God.

Notwithstanding the pains that are taken by our national, sunday and other schools, and by the several dissenting denominations here, in giving religious instruction to some thousands of poor children, the numbers of our youth are quite appalling, who abandon themselves to habits of sabbath-breaking, in playing and gambling, in cursing and swearing, in hardening and corrupting each other.

On Sunday evenings, apprentices and servants, are, by the mistaken and fatal kindness of their masters, allowed to be at their own disposal to go where they please. And I have no doubt, that more wickedness is committed, and more young persons are ruined on this sacred

evening, which ought to be a season of peculiar benefit to their souls, than through the whole week.

My dear brethren, the subject before us, is one of the utmost importance. It is essentially connected with the honor of God, the welfare of society, and the eternal interests of the soul. I have therefore treated it with the fulness and plainness which it deserves.

In conclusion, I beg seriously to offer to you two directions; first, with respect to the outward observance; secondly, with respect to the spiritual use of the Lord's day; and may God impress them deeply on all our consciences.

1. With respect to the outward observance of the sabbath, I wish every head of a family to consider his responsibility, for himself and for his household. This responsibility, my brethren, is increased, in proportion as your example operates on others, from your property, rank, talents or influence. Never, then, except from necessity, absent yourself from the house of God. Be not satisfied with attending but once, and with spending the rest of the day irreligiously. If you attend not the evening service,*

* In the church where these sermons were preached, there is no afternoon duty.

be the minister of God in your household. Call your children and servants together, and endeavour to profit them by religious conversation, instruction, reading and prayer. Let me entreat you to withdraw your permission to your servants to go out, and expose themselves to danger, on the Sunday evenings. No good and steady servant will object to the restraint; and giddy, and thoughtless servants, are, of all others, the last to be indulged.—Give up Sunday visits. Abridge as much as possible, the labours of your servants on that day, that they may have the benefit of sharing with you in the public means of grace. In short, let Joshua's pious resolution be yours: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

2. In speaking on the spiritual use of the sabbath, I address you all, young and old, parents and children, masters and servants. Vain, with respect to the salvation of our souls, is the decent outward observance of the sabbath, if our hearts are not engaged with God; if we do not worship him "in spirit and in truth."

If your affections are yet set on this present world; if you are not affected and humbled by a lively preception of your sinfulness and guilt, under this and every commandment; if you

feel no need and desire of the expiating blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, to atone for your daily sins, nor of the Holy Spirit to sanctify, direct and rule your hearts,—I cannot address and advise you as Christians; “you have a name to live, but are dead” in sin. But if it has pleased God in his mercy, to infuse into your soul the spirit of a true and sincere worshipper, then let a method like the following, as far as circumstances will allow, be resolutely adopted.—On Sundays rise early; shut out from your mind earthly thoughts and cares. Begin the day with God, in spiritual meditation and earnest secret prayer, for his presence and blessing in his public means of grace. Oh, if you enter the house of God with your minds steeped in worldly thoughts and feelings, the worship and the word of God cannot interest you. You will be like “the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer charm he ever so wisely.” Seek then, before you come, the spirit of supplication and prayer; the hearing ear, and the understanding heart. When you join your fellow-worshippers here, watch against a proud, fastidious spirit, and against wandering and distracted thoughts. Realize the presence of God; approach the mercy seat,

in the name and mediation of your great High-priest; and look through means and ministers to the God of all grace in Christ Jesus.

After public worship, retire to your closet. Recall what you have heard. Meditate upon it, with reference to your own case;—and ask of God to make it lastingly profitable to your soul.

If, my dear brethren, you thus endeavour to sanctify and improve your sabbaths, you will soon find them the best and happiest of your days. The Lord will “make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; he will lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and grant you his peace.” He will strengthen you to meet the trials, temptations and duties of the week; and each successive sabbath will bring you measures of hope and comfort and holy joy in the Lord, which will be pledges and preparatives for that sabbath of ceaseless bliss and praise, which occupies the glorified spirits in the temple of God above.

SERMON VI.
THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS xx. 12.

*Honor thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long
upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

OUR blessed Lord, on being asked, which is the first and great commandment of the law, replied: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and mind and soul and strength; and thy neighbour as thyself." He added: "On these commandments hang all the law and prophets." He hereby teaches us, that a principle of divine love planted by the Holy Spirit in the heart of a humbled, believing Christian, will dispose him to cordial obedience to God's holy law, in its double bearing on his duties to God and to man. A Christian's *immediate* duty to God we have considered under the four first commandments.

We now proceed to the six last, written on the second table. Though they establish *directly* our duties to our fellow creatures, yet, *indirectly* these are also duties to God; for in doing to men what God requires and commands, we obey the law and will of God.—God formed man, with a view to social life. His object is to establish order and peace on earth; and by means of every member of human society, to promote the safety, comfort and happiness of all. In a community of civilized men, as in the constitution of the limbs of the body, there are, consequently, various different relations in which the several members stand to each other. The first relation, and which is indeed the foundation and model of all the others, is that which subsists between *parents* and *children*.—In the simplicity of life which prevailed in the first ages of the world, almost all the relations of society were exhibited under the same roof. The Patriarch Abraham, for instance, was at once parent, master, judge, minister and king over his household. Hence it follows, that in commanding children to honor their parents, the Lord God, in effect, establishes the reciprocal duties, not only between parents and children, but also between all superiors and inferiors; masters and servants; rulers and subjects;

ministers and people ; aged and young ; rich and poor ; wise and ignorant.—Our attention will be confined this evening to the very important mutual duties of *parents* and *children*.

The relation which binds *parents* to their child is one of tender endearment and large responsibility. They give birth to a being that, after a short life upon earth, will be eternally glorified or miserable. God has constituted them its guardians for body and soul.—First, with respect to the body and this life. It is the duty of parents to provide for the support of their children, while young and unable to provide for themselves. Parents were once in helpless infancy, and, under God, owe to *their* parents the supports of their childhood, the education of their youth, and all the comforts and advantages which arise to them from learning, station, calling or property. God requires them now to repay their debt of gratitude to their parents in their children ; and so carry into effect his wise and gracious designs, in linking families and generations to each other by their successive necessities. Parents then, who would rank among christian and civilized beings, or who would not be out-done even by the most cruel and ferocious beast of the forest, must feel, that they are the instru-

ments, by whom the Lord means to impart subsistence and every other practicable good to their offspring. "He that does not diligently provide for his own," according to his ability, an Apostle declares, "denies the faith and is worse than an infidel." Parents, then, to whose exertions a family looks up for support, should cultivate the qualifications, and practice the duties, suited to their sex and station. The father should be industrious, sober, careful; the mother diligent and frugal. Without these properties, an affluent income cannot support a family; with them, if parents fear God and cast their care upon him as a covenant Father in Christ, even in the lowest and most dependent conditions of life, they are, in general, able to meet their necessary wants, and to enjoy a peace, of which wealthy wickedness never tasted.—Next, it is the duty of all parents to give their children some education. I say of *all* parents. For every child should be able to read his bible; and now national, sunday and other schools, are open to give free instruction to all that will come to receive it.—It is the duty of all parents to bring up their children in habits of useful industry. No parent, even of large and independent property, should destine his son to a life of idleness. If

there is a being, who may be expected to become an incumbrance, a nuisance to society, a burthen to himself, and a prey to vice, folly and misery, it is he who has nothing to do.— I may here remark also, that those parents best consult the peace, comfort, respectability and usefulness of their daughters, who place them for education, where their minds may be furnished with religious instruction; solid, general knowledge; and useful rather than splendid accomplishments. It is only this class of young women that can supply rational companions, exemplary wives, instructive mothers.

On selecting situations for his children, the pious parent will use great caution. He will seek out a master or employer, who will exercise over them the conscientious inspection of a christian guardian. The age at which a youth usually removes from beneath a parent's eye, is the most important and critical period of life. It generally fixes the cast and character of his future days. And being a season of strong passions, weak judgment, and little reflection, no wonder, corrupt as our nature is, that in this dissipated age, so many young men, being set down in the very sphere of temptation, without superintendence and without control, should become "a grief to

their father, and bitterness to her that bare them;" when even those, who, brought up under great religious advantages, and placed out with the greatest care, too often blast the hopes, and distress the heart of the disappointed parent.—I need only observe further, on this head, that parents are taught and authorized by many scripture examples, to watch over their children, when grown up; to reprove and endeavour to check their misconduct; and to assist them with counsel, when it will be received, on every important step, especially in the choice of a partner for life. In deliberating on this connection, a parent's advice or authority should not have regard so much to considerations of interest or ambition, as to qualifications, in the party in view, for solid, domestic comfort; nor should he ever consent to, much less promote the union of a truly pious child, but to one that is like minded. Let such a child marry only in the Lord. God was angry with good old Eli, because his sons made themselves vile, and he used no efforts to restrain them; and it was the anxious wish of aged Abraham that his son Isaac might not marry a Canaanitish woman, but one that feared God, and would not obstruct, but promote his best interests.

But this remark introduces us to the consideration of the parent's duty, in a still more important point of view; I mean, as it bears on the *eternal welfare* of his child. Here a christian parent will feel most, and find his most difficult province. One wish of his soul is, that his children may be successful and respectable in the world, so far as may conduce to the glory of God and their own real good. But the desire nearest his heart is, that, being renewed by heavenly grace, and pardoned and accepted through faith in Christ Jesus, they may be delivered from the dominion, guilt and eternal punishment of sin, and made really and effectually, "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven." That this blessed change may pass upon the hearts of his children, since God works by means, and especially by the powerful means of a parent's instruction, conduct and example, he is required to give them early information in the great, first truths and principles of religion. Children at an early age can understand and feel, when told of the character and presence of God; of his knowledge of their actions, words and thoughts; of his hatred of sin, and of his love and pity for them that fear and love and pray to him. Soon their hearts

can be affected with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came from heaven and died to save them from eternal misery, to make their holy God their friend, and to obtain for them grace on earth and glory in heaven. The word of God presents to parents many exhortations and promises for this duty. St. Paul suggests to Timothy, as one of the fundamental blessings of his life, that "from a child he had known the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation;" and Solomon affirms, as a general truth, (with many exceptions indeed,) that if you "train up a child in the way in which he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it." To a defect in this early attention in children, we may, in a large degree, ascribe the deplorable ignorance, ungodliness and wickedness which prevail. If children are left to grow up ignorant of God and themselves, and are not duly brought to the house of God, nor instructed at home, all the seeds of corruption which are inbred in their fallen nature must shoot up, and occupy the whole field of their hearts. But whatever pains a parent may take, in conveying religious instruction to his children, as we are creatures of imitation, and prone to evil, except he teach them by *example* also, all his efforts will be

vain. How can a parent expect that God will bless what he says, if he is himself offending against God by what he does? How can he expect that they will attach any weight to instruction, which, by his conduct, he shews them has no influence on his own heart and practice? How can they be meek, teachable, obedient, if they see him violent, stubborn, selfwilled? How can they dread a lie, if he speak not the truth? How be true and just, if they see him cheat, over-reach and defraud? How be pure and chaste in their language, if they hear profane and indelicate expressions from his lips? How can they dread the wrath and desire the favor of God, if they perceive no fear of God before his eyes? How can they be expected to delight in the bible, or to give themselves to earnest prayer, when they discover in him nothing of serious religion, perhaps no attention even to the form of religion, between one sabbath and another.

But it is more than time that we proceed to the second part of our subject—the duty of *children to parents*, which we must briefly dismiss. It is thus expressed: “*honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee.*”

1. Children must reverence their parents as such, and yield them the respect due to those to whom, under God, they owe their being and all their blessings. This debt of reverential respect for parents, no misconduct or want of respectability on their part, can cancel. Their failure in duty, does not discharge a child from his; else, an inferior would be entitled to sit in judgment on a superior in station. They must answer to God if they fail; they are still parents, and must be honoured for their relation's sake and for the Lord's sake. Solomon was respectful to his mother Bathsheba, and our Lord was subject to his humble parents. There cannot be a character more hateful and contemptible before God and man, than the son that behaves with insolence, contempt and irreverence to his parents. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, the young eagles shall eat it." One of the curses denounced on audacious sinners falls on them, who "set light by their father and mother."

2. *Honor* implies *love*. If the love of gratitude is ever due from one creature to another, it is due from a child to his parent. Children owe a debt which they can never discharge ;

to the father, for his exertions for their support and education ; to the mother, for her painful sufferings, her anxious fondness, and her fostering cares. Love and gratitude must constrain every good-principled child, eagerly to seize opportunities of making a return of filial affection and kindness. This will be best done by yielding a cheerful submission to their will and authority, and by a constant endeavour to make them happy. He that truly fears God, and has any claim to the title of a dutiful child and a christian, will conscientiously “ obey his parents in the Lord ;” that is, in all their lawful expectations from him, out of respect to the Lord’s command and glory. He will study to please them in his conduct and behaviour. He will receive their instructions ; consult their experience ; comply with their wishes, and contribute to their comfort. When grown up, he will still remember, that their happiness is bound up in his own, and that their authority has not expired. And when they have reached the years of infirmity and decay, he will shew his affection and piety, in bearing with them. If they want assistance and he can give it, he will rejoice in the opportunity of paying back some of those endearing kindnesses to feeble, helpless age, which he received in feeble, helpless childhood. To

contribute to make the evening of their days happy and their departure easy, by administering to their support, their comfort, and above all to their spiritual good, will yield him a gratification which no earthly pleasure can afford. Ruth carrying home her gleanings, to feed an aged, distressed mother in law; and Joseph, now lord of Egypt, weeping over and embracing the corpse of his father, whose last days he had made plentiful, honourable and happy, are models of grace and filial piety for every dutiful child to imitate.

Having considered the duties of parents and children which Almighty God has established in this law, let us now proceed to an application of this important subject, each to ourselves. We will begin with that relation which we have all sustained. How, then, have we discharged the duties due to our parents? If, brethren, you can, on the whole, look back with pleasure on your general conduct towards them: if you have loved them in your heart and honoured them by your words, behaviour, and conduct; submitted to their authority, obeyed their instructions and commands, endeavoured to promote their comfort, and borne with their defects and infirmities, in the fear of God, and from a thankful sense of the Lord's mercies and their

goodness to you, you have, annexed to this commandment, a special promise of God's favor and blessing through life: "that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee." And though promised temporal comforts are not now to be so certainly looked for as under the dispensation of Moses, but are rather to be taken as types of richer spiritual mercies, yet it has been very frequently remarked by persons of observation, that obstinate, rebellious, ungrateful children have been given up to sin, misery and infamy; and dutiful, godly children have prospered in "all they have put their hands unto."—But, I appeal to the consciences of such of you, as have been most exemplary in filial duty: must you not confess, that you have been guilty of innumerable instances of self-will, disobedience and rebellion? Have you not much to be forgiven under this law for sins of commission, and much more for sins of omission? Let this conviction humble you before God, and make you deeply feel how much you need his pardoning mercy, through the atonement of Jesus. If truly penitent, mercy will not be denied you. If your earthly parents have forgiven you and love you still, your heavenly Father is much more ready to forgive those

who mourn before him for their transgressions and sins, and plead for mercy in the name of Christ. "For like as a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

Possibly there may be in this congregation some, whose consciences, while we have dwelt on the duties of a child, smite, or ought to smite them, with keen remorse, and with dread of the righteous judgment of God. In your early years, you have gone great lengths in idleness and wickedness, in disobedience, insolence and rebellion; and when grown up, have despised the instruction, advice and authority of your parents; squandered their money, neglected your business, and plunged into habits of extravagance, sensuality and dissipation; forsaken the house of God and the society of good men, and become companions of profligates and of fools.—Oh! sinners, how will you answer to God for this? Was it for this, that your father laboured; for this did your mother rear you through tedious childhood? Is this the reward you return them; to embitter their days, and bring "down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave," deprived, in the agonies of death, of all hope of meeting you in heaven? Be assured that every admonition which you have despised; every sigh and tear you

have cost them, has ascended before God, to bring down a curse on your guilty head. If there is a sinner upon earth, who, more than another, has cause to fear the hottest wrath of God, in time and in eternity, it is you. Let shame and self-abhorrence drive you to implore the mighty grace of God to melt your unnatural and barbarous heart; and begin at length to plead with God, for your Redeemer's sake, to have mercy on you, and not to shut you up in hell with the worst of murderers.—If, my young hearers, you are the children of pious parents, and if the Lord has inclined your heart to fear and love him, and to delight in his ways; O praise and adore him continually for giving you such parents; for having heard their prayers in your behalf, and for having blessed to you their instruction and example; and never think that you can do enough to please, assist and comfort them.—If, unhappily, your parents are worldly-minded and without serious religion; if they are sabbath breakers, and “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;” if they are despisers and enemies of real godliness, intemperate in their appetites, impure and profane in their conversation, or in any other way dangerous in their example; so far mind them not, except

to pray for them. Set before you better patterns; if they will not guide you towards heaven, let them not lead you down to hell.

Let me now, lastly, apply the weighty commands of this law to parents. We must deeply lament, that a large proportion of those, to whom the warning, alarming voice of God's law is most necessary, will not come into his house to hear it. Hundreds in this city, are breaking this commandment in a way that must bring eternal destruction on their own souls, and probably on their sons, and sons' sons.

What are we to think of those, who, with an unfeeling cruelty never exhibited by the fiercest beast of prey, refuse to labour for their needy progeny; but lounge away their time in sloth and idleness, while their children are pining in hunger, clothed in rags, and wasting in ignorance and sin? What of the beastly drunkard, who spends in an alehouse those earnings which are due and necessary for his starving home? Is not the wretch, who thus wastes on his appetites that which should procure his children's bread, a more detestable robber than the midnight thief.

And how are those persons less guilty, though in a more reputable way, who expend that which might be properly and necessarily laid

out in providing for the present or future welfare of their children, as well as in various acts of service to the cause of God and man, in expensive shew, company, dissipation and luxury? Or what can be a grosser act of pride, injustice and cruelty, than to bring up children in habits of expense and display far above their probable future condition in life; habits, which if they do not end in entire poverty, disgrace and wretchedness, lay the foundation for disappointment and unhappiness, and expose to many dangerous temptations.—Is there any parent here, who complains over the conduct of an untoward, unpromising, vicious child? He should first seriously ask himself: Am I, in no degree, the blameable cause of my complaints? Have I left my children to grow up in ignorance of God, of Christ, and of themselves? Have I not shewn them what sin is, in its nature and evil, nor proved to them, both by my words and actions, that I fear God and hate sin myself? Have I indulged their humours, flattered their vanity, fed their pride, and led them into scenes of dissipating vanity and pleasure? Have I placed them where their principles and morals were in danger; and in my zeal for their temporal advantage, used no precautions for guarding the interests of their

souls? Nay, have I been to them a positive example and guide to ungodliness? Have they learned of me to neglect prayer, the study of the Scriptures, and the public, social and family worship of God—to despise all serious religion, and those who profess it—to indulge, not to mortify the sinful lusts of the flesh—to dissemble, to over-reach, to lie, to swear?—What wonder, if your present wishes and hopes for them are disappointed; and that they cast a gloom over your declining years. Or, be it so, that they are industrious, active men of business, is this life to engross all a parent's anxieties? Have you no interest in the souls of your children? Could you with indifference hear the judge of quick and dead pass on them the dreadful sentence: "Depart thou cursed." How will you feel, if their blood be required at your hand? How will you bear to hear the agonizing cries of your child, ruined by your neglect or unchristian example! The very thought is insupportable. May every ungodly, unnatural parent feel it now, and tremble for himself and his children, before the day for repentance, mercy and grace, has passed away for ever!

You, my brethren, who have most anxiously at heart the eternal salvation of your children,

will feel much cause for humiliation, on account of your many defects towards them, both in instruction, discipline and example. You will be thankful that God's mercy, through Christ, can pardon these defects, and that his grace can overrule their evil tendency. If after all your endeavours and prayers, any of your children are unpromising, do not despair. Wait, walk circumspectly, admonish and exhort; hope and pray. You have many promises to encourage you to believe, that he who is become a reconciled Father to you, will "pour his spirit on your seed, and his blessing on your offspring." Perhaps long after you are numbered with the dead, your prayers may be remembered, and the desire of your heart fulfilled.

If, by the grace of God, your children are now become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, I am sure you will account it the highest favor which God could bestow upon you. I know not so lovely a spectacle upon earth, as to see parents and children united by one spirit, in the faith of Christ, and in the love and fear of God, running their heavenly race together. They are a blessing and a comfort to one another. Their house is the temple of the Lord, their hearts his altar; their souls and bodies a living sacrifice to his glory. Peace,

joy, harmony and love, are in their dwellings. They are ripening together for heaven. And though they will be transplanted, at different times, into the paradise of God, the sorrows of separation will be relieved by the delightful assurance of soon meeting before the throne, to part no more. There the children will praise God for such parents, and for his blessing on their pious efforts; and the parents, admiring the grace and goodness of God to them and their offspring, will exclaim, in everlasting gratitude and praise: "Behold we, and the children whom the Lord has given us."

SERMON VII.

THE SECOND ON
THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS — 12.

*Honor thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long
upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

THE duty which subsists between superiors and inferiors in the relation of parents and children having been considered, the duty of married persons properly claims our next attention. As they are connected in the closest bond of union with each other, not to be separated but by death, and must contribute essentially to each other's happiness or misery, marriage is unquestionably one of the most important relations in social life. Marriage is an ordinance of divine appointment, instituted in the time of man's innocence; and, when entered into with suitable qualifications for a

restless votary of dissipation and pleasure, but formed for the sober, rational, retired sphere of domestic life. And for the continuance of affection and happiness, there must be a suitability in their taste, tempers, age, education and habits. Conjugal happiness, like the sensitive plant, shrinks from the slightest rudeness of touch; and if the wills and humours of the parties clash, even though there be nothing positively blameable and sinful in either, peace and unity cannot be enjoyed.—But lastly on this head, and above all, in order to ensure real peace and worth of character, to possess the favor and blessing of God, and to reach at last those pure mansions of glory, “where they neither marry nor are given in marriage,” it is absolutely necessary, that both parties be truly and decidedly *spiritually minded*; that they have been brought to the knowledge of themselves as fallen sinful creatures; that the natural pride and self-will of their minds, and the worldliness, selfishness and depravity of their hearts be counteracted by the renovating influences of the Holy Spirit; that they possess the humility, meekness and holy love which a justifying faith in the Lord Jesus Christ inspires; that they fear God, study and obey his will, and have their chief delight in communion

with him, and in doing good in their generation. If both parties are destitute of a principle of true godliness ; walking in the “ blindness of their hearts” and the “ vanity of their minds ;” uninfluenced by the purifying grace of God and by the holy principles of the gospel of Christ ; what chance of happiness, when both will seek it, where it cannot be found ? What will there be to restrain their bad tempers and besetting sins from breaking out ? What will there be to sustain them in love and patience under crosses and afflictions ? What to fill up the dreary void in their time and hearts ? What to constitute them, in exertion and example, the heads of a well-ordered Christian family ? When we consider what human nature is, and the utter absence of religious knowledge, principle and feeling, under which so many enter the marriage state, we can only ascribe it to the controlling providence and restraining grace of God, that still more numerous instances of domestic strife and wretchedness do not occur.—Young persons, who really love their Saviour, and prefer their eternal to all secular interests, are strictly admonished by the word of God, and warned by painful example and experience, to “ marry only in the Lord.”—“ Be ye not unequally yoked together with un-

believers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? what communion hath light with darkness? what concord hath Christ with Belial? what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" Let not such a person hope to gain over the other party in true conversion of heart to Christ, which is the work and prerogative of the Spirit of God only. The more usual result is, that the religious party is hindered, frequently opposed and persecuted, and not seldom drawn back to the world, to sin and to perdition !

II. But it is more than time, that we proceed to point out the duties of married persons ; and first, those duties which are *common* to husband and wife. It is required of married persons, that they be faithful to each other. In the marriage contract the parties solemnly vow, in the presence of God, that they will "live together after God's holy ordinance, and keep only to each other" till separated by death. But as all instances of conjugal unfaithfulness come under the cognizance and condemnation of the seventh commandment, I go on to observe, that their duty is, to love and bear with each other. As they "are no more twain but one flesh," not to love each other, is not to love themselves. "He that loveth his wife," (saith an Apostle) loveth

himself, for no man ever hated his own flesh. In order that mutual affection may stand the test of long and close intimacy, and may remain unimpaired amidst the trials and agitations of life, married persons should settle it in their minds, that they are united to persons subject, like themselves, to infirmities and defects, which they must bear with, in hope of the same indulgence. If good temper, forbearance and kind offices are neglected, affection must languish. They must not, with merciless keenness detect, and with censorious severity dwell on the faults and failings of the party to whom they are united ; but distinguish and dwell upon their *good* qualities ; and so find cause of thankfulness to God, and of affection for the partner of their joys or their sorrows. Forgetfulness of what ought not to be remembered, becomes those who have so much to be forgiven of God. Instead of thwarting, opposing and vexing each other, (the malignant enjoyment of proud, unfeeling, perverse minds,) they are called upon to bear with each others burthens, to sympathize in each others sorrows, and endeavour to be a comfort and an " help meet" to each other. They must cheerfully co-operate in discharging the duties, and sustaining the cares of their family, shewing that

they have but one mind and one interest, uniting to rule their house well, and to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." In vain, however, shall we look for those high principles that are to produce the holy and "peaceable fruits of righteousness," but in hearts united to Christ by faith, and to each other by christian love, through the Holy Spirit. It is this divine principle alone, which humbles pride, corrects bad tempers, subdues those corruptions and removes those disorders in the mind, from which coldness and quarrels arise; and which raises the taste above those expensive pleasures and dissipating amusements, which lay the foundation for remorse, dislike, weariness and perhaps want, at home. See you a married pair, truly spiritually minded, formed in their tempers to the "mind that was in Christ," enjoying religious conversation, reading and prayer—rejoicing in every opportunity of shewing their love to God and their benevolence to man, and realizing together the "blessed hope of eternal life" in glory,—there you will assuredly find a pure, refined, exalted, mutual affection. The image of Christ, reflected by both, generates in each for the other an esteem, a regard, which has in it less of earth than heaven. This sacred affection, the evidence of faith, the fruit

of the Spirit, renovated each day at the throne of grace, ensures mutual tenderness, candour and kindness—relieves them from that weight of family cares and anxieties which they feel who know not God, and cannot cast their care upon him—sanctifies their difficulties and crosses to the good of their souls, and inspires a hope beyond the grave which bears their spirits up. Blessed then are they, who are thus spiritually united to Christ and to each other. They are truly helpers to each other in their temporal and spiritual concerns; they are lovely and useful and exemplary in their lives, and in their deaths, they will not be long, or ever again divided.

III. In addition to these reciprocal duties and dispositions, there are others *peculiar* to each. The husband, while he is affirmed in the word of God, to be the head of the wife, is commanded not to exercise towards her an overbearing tyranny, but to use his authority for her support, protection and comfort. “The husband,” says St. Paul, “is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church;” then he adds, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” He protects it with his daily care; nourishes it with all spiritual blessings,

and comforts it with his presence and his love. After this example, the husband is to provide diligently, according to his ability, for the necessities and comforts of his wife, as for himself. Whatever he earns, whatever he possesses, is as much hers as his own. He that expends on his own appetites and lusts, what he ought to share with her, is a profligate hard-hearted monster, detestable in the sight of God and man.—His love to her, after the same example of Christ to his church, must shew itself in a tender regard to the delicacy and weakness of her sex. To adopt an Apostle's language, "he will not be bitter against her." He will give honor to her as the weaker vessel. He will not confine the expression of his affection to formal civility; much less will he hypocritically put on the appearance of kindness to her in public, to be exchanged for neglect, harshness and unkindness at home. He will make her the partner of his joys, as well as of his cares; disclose to her his concerns, and consult her as his truest friend. He will prove his affection by cultivating domestic habits, and by shewing that the highest enjoyment, which he derives from earthly sources, is found at *home*.

The wife has her peculiar correspondent duties towards her husband. It is repeatedly

enjoined, in the word of God, that she render to him suitable reverence and submission. "Nature," observes Dr. Paley, (from the pen of a christian moralist, we should have expected, "the God of nature,") may have made and left the sexes nearly equal in their faculties, and perfectly so in their rights; but to guard against those competitions, which equality, or a contested superiority, is almost sure to produce, the christian scriptures enjoin upon the wife, that obedience which she here promises, in terms peremptory and absolute." "Let the wife be subject to her own husband in every thing, as the church is subject to Christ." The wife should obey with cheerfulness; not exhibiting a peevish, haughty, obstinate, sullen, contradicting temper; but "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price." I believe that many good husbands have been made bad, and all bad husbands worse, by the violent, reproachful, teasing, irritating behaviour of their wives. Should the conduct of husbands be ever so trying and cruel, a submissive, patient, affectionate deportment, especially if united with fervent prayer to God, in behalf of the offending party, is much more like to have a happy effect; at all events, it best becomes a christian wife.

As the husband should be diligent and industrious, the wife should be careful and economical. If she wish to have the affections and society of her husband, let her study to make home agreeable to him, by shewing that it is so to herself. The Apostle thus describes some women that were a disgrace to their profession as christians, and a scandal to religion: "They learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not." He directs the minister Titus, to "warn the aged women to be in behaviour as becometh holiness; and to teach the younger married women to be prudent, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."—Thus should the pious husband, after the labours and anxieties of his daily calling, find a comfortable retreat beneath his own roof. And if portions of their leisure-intervals be devoted to innocent, cheerful, useful conversation; to reading the scriptures and other good books, and to family worship; if their hearts are indeed purified by the grace of God, formed into his image and filled with his love; and if their affections are supremely fixed on

the crown of glory which is laid up in Christ for his believing and obedient people, their time will not hang heavy on their hands. They will feel no desire to plunge into those empty and corrupting scenes of dissipation and pleasure, to which numbers even of married persons, who know not God, nor the power and comforts of religion, are obliged to flee for refuge from themselves and from each other; but, amidst all the decays of personal attraction, they will grow in pure affection, esteem and endearment, till they are separated, soon to meet again and part no more from the Lord or from each other.

My brethren, will the above description apply to married persons generally of the present day? Do they all seem to be living in perfect love and peace together, of one heart and one mind, travelling together towards the heavenly Zion, in the faith of Christ, in the fear of God, and in an exemplary discharge of the relative duties, which they owe to each other?—Or is not a want of domestic comfort extensively visible; and is not the cause of it to be found in a failure of duty?—Enquire then, each for yourselves. Have any of you entered into this important connection, without possessing, or seeking in the object of your choice, those

qualifications which prepare their possessor for a holy, happy life? Does each husband among you faithfully keep his marriage vow; love his wife, and comfort, "honor and keep her, in sickness and in health?" Or does any one treat his wife with neglect or severity? Do you rob her of your society and money, to spend them in company, pleasure and sensual gratification? Do you suffer haughty and impatient tempers to break out, and not rather endeavour to preserve her love and esteem, by kind and affectionate behaviour?

As a wife, do you neglect to reverence and please your husband? Do you spend in extravagance, what he earns by industry? or do you irritate and disgust him by froward tempers and unkind language; by indulgence in sloth, or by the love of pleasure, dress and display; and not direct and manage your domestic concerns well? In such cases, how can you expect but to be unhappy in each other? The cause of your unhappiness, you may each be disposed to impute to the other: it may be justly so imputed in part; but it is also to be looked for in yourselves.—Have you no pleasure in religion?—No impression of the value and danger of your souls? Do you derive no peace, hope, and joy, from faith in Christ your Saviour; nor

feel the purifying, harmonizing influence of his love? Have you no practical reverence for God—no trust in his providence—no submission to his will, no strengthening aid from him in answer to prayer? But are you still under the dominion of all the pride, worldliness and selfishness of your fallen nature? Then I must affirm the impossibility of your being uniformly and permanently happy in your own minds, or in each other, however amiable, in many respects, you both may be. You are seeking happiness from a source that cannot yield it, and with hearts that cannot enjoy it; you want both the taste and materials for happiness. And all married persons who hear me must be convinced, how much they have to be forgiven, for their defects in duty to each other; and how much they have failed, in promoting the temporal comfort, and still how much more, in advancing the spiritual interests of their partners. If we regard the word of God, and know our own hearts, and recollect the particulars of our past lives, we shall find great cause to humble ourselves before God; to plead with him for Christ's sake, "to have mercy upon us; and, for the future, to incline our hearts to keep this law."

Let all, then, who would glorify God by an

exemplary discharge of conjugal and other duties, "seek first the kingdom of God" into their hearts, by faith in Christ Jesus. The humble, thankful, spiritually-minded believer, who feels his Saviour's love, rejoices in his great salvation, and lives upon his grace, can alone steadily fill up any station of life in a truly christian manner. I affectionately exhort you, then, my married hearers, whom providence has elevated to a state of plenty and exemption from labour, but who pass through many dull and weary hours, to seek from above the power and consolations of true religion. Then you will be happy, and a blessing and comfort to each other.—I beseech you, whose lot is cast in lower and more difficult circumstances, to seek, in the enjoyment of the same blessings, relief from your cares and anxieties. Rich in faith, resigned to the will, and confident in the care and love of God, and sustained and comforted by his Spirit, your trials will become light; your fretful, teasing passions, will subside; your perverse and crooked tempers will be subdued; you will be able to bear with each other's peculiarities and infirmities, and a solid foundation will be laid for lasting peace and happiness.

If any of you who "love the Lord Jesus

Christ in sincerity," are yoked to an unbelieving partner, your case is common, but difficult, especially if you are the wife. Be not, however, deterred from following the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully, even though assailed with opposition and persecution from the person, who ought to be the sharer and helper of your joy. Avoid every *unnecessary* cause of offence. Be not singular for trifles. Be meek and kind and conciliating; but be firm in holding faith and a good conscience; and cheerfully bear your cross for Christ's sake, if he call you to take it up. To a blameless walk and affectionate forgiving temper, add fervent prayer. "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether," by the Lord's blessing on thy example, efforts and prayers, "thou shalt save thy husband; or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife." They may at least, be put to silence, when they behold your holy, consistent, blameless conversation in Christ.

Ye, whose hearts are united to Christ by faith, and to each other in the bonds of christian love, should never cease to give thanks to God for the inestimable blessing of his mercy and grace conferred on you both, in Christ Jesus. Remember, you are intended to be the especial instruments of each others present comfort and

everlasting happiness. Guard then against every thing that may diminish your mutual esteem and affection. Beware of being in any way, a snare and an hindrance, instead of a blessing; but rather endeavour to edify each other, as "heirs together of the grace of life." Provoke each other only to love and to good works, in your Redeemer's service, and may the God of love and peace be with you.

SERMON VIII.

THE THIRD ON THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS xx. 12.

*Honor thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long
upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

IT has already been remarked that, according to the explanation given in our church catechism, under this fifth commandment are contained all those duties, which one member of society owes to another, arising from their respective relations and stations in life.—In addition, then, to those which subsist between the two great family relations—between parents and children, and between husbands and wives, already considered, there are others, which as members of the family of Christ, and of civil society, we are required to discharge. The

principal of these I shall endeavour to explain, enforce and apply, in their order.

A mutual duty of very great importance lies between *masters* and their *servants*, *apprentices* and other *dependents*. Heads of families seem, in general, far from being sufficiently aware of the charge and responsibility, which they take upon them, in receiving servants into their houses, and of the account they have to give to God for their conduct towards them. In judging how they must act, they are not to permit the maxims and practice of others to determine them, but conscience and the word of God. Little do *they* know or regard the will of God, who imagine that all they have to do with their servants, is to see that they are diligent and faithful in their service. If servants owe many offices to them, they also owe many to their servants.—One duty of masters and mistresses of families is, to treat their servants with *kindness*, *gentleness* and *civility*. God has ordained in his providence that there shall be different ranks and orders of men : society could not otherwise exist. But the person in the humblest situation, if a real Christian, is as dear in the sight of God as his master. Let him discharge the duties of his station well, from love to the Lord that bought

him, and from a desire to obey and glorify God, and he will be as great in the kingdom of heaven as the christian monarch, who has adorned a crown. Our natural love of power is great, and we are prone to abuse it, and to act with unfeeling selfishness towards those under our control. Hence some command and treat their servants as if they were slaves, or a lower species of beings made only for their convenience, like the horse or the dog; and never appear satisfied with them, however anxious to please. But it is not more the duty of masters or mistresses than it is for their comfort, interest and respectability, to endeavour to gain the esteem, affection and confidence of their good servants. Such servants may, by kind, consistent treatment, be engaged to take a real interest in their welfare, and to serve them faithfully with all their power. If then you would shew yourselves to be possessed of the humble, meek and merciful mind that was in Christ; and if you regard the word of God and desire to glorify him, and to secure your own domestic peace and comfort, exact no more labour from your servants, than is reasonable and moderate; avoid all contemptuousness and harshness in words and manner; all needless suspicion and rebuke, as well as all un-

guarded familiarity. Be not perpetually blaming and chiding them; but with a steady, mild and affectionate authority, exercise that rule which the providence of God has given you over them.—“Ye masters,” says St. Paul, “forbear threatening,” (that is, unkind, haughty, tyrannical language and conduct towards them.) The reason he gives should be decisive with us: “knowing that your master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.” If you judge the conduct of your servants with merciless severity, remember that you have a master in heaven, who will soon judge you; and among other things, for your treatment of your servants you must give an account to Him, who for your numberless offences must shew you mercy, or you perish. In order, then, that they may be accepted on that day, as the upright and holy followers of the Lamb, masters must be just, faithful, upright towards their servants and dependents. “Masters give to your servants that which is *just* and *equal*; knowing that ye also have a master in heaven.” By just and equal or fair, we are not to understand merely, that they must pay them their stipulated wages, and at the proper time; but also afford to them all other necessary things for body and soul, which they

may reasonably expect from a christian employer. In a temporal sense, they may reasonably look to us, in health, for proper food and rest; and in sickness, infirmity or age, for our compassion and assistance; and at all times, for such a share in our confidence and regard, as their conduct entitles them to expect. In a spiritual sense, they have several urgent claims upon us. They are fellow creatures, fellow sinners, and in profession at least, fellow christians with their masters. Many of them are young, and need direction; thoughtless, and need restraint; faulty, and need reproof and correction; ignorant, and need instruction in the things that "belong to their everlasting peace." I am quite convinced that if masters and mistresses really discharged their duty as the heads of a christian family, towards servants and others under their influence, a large portion of the ignorance, idleness, unfaithfulness, vice and misery by which the inferior ranks of society are extensively unfitted for the duties of this life and for happiness in the next, would, by the blessing of God on their efforts, be done away. As it is, when servants and apprentices are, in every hour of leisure, left to themselves; when no vice is checked, but such as immediately affects the master's interest;

when no religious instruction is given ; nay when the example at the head of the family is decidedly against a religious and holy life, are we to wonder that so few good servants, so trained, are to be met with ; that so few possess, I need not say, any fear of God, any love of Christ, any thought for their souls, but even any moral principle.—What is the kitchen of a large, gay, fashionable family, filled with a number of servants, many of them pampered in a life of ease and plenty, who see nothing but dissipation in those they serve, left without family instruction, and prayer ; hardly ever taken to the house of God ; compelled by unnecessary labour and service, to profane the sabbath ; and mixing with others as neglected, as corrupted, as themselves ; what is such a situation likely to be, but a nursery of ungodliness, a hot bed of vice ; the members of it not only hardening and injuring each other, but infecting the neighbourhood with which they associate.—If ever the Lord be pleased to effect, in the great mass of our population, a reform of morals, and a revival of true and spiritual religion, it will be, by disposing heads of families, having first felt the power of religion on their own hearts, to attend to the duty, which they owe to the souls of their servants.

They will make their houses, each morning and night through the week, houses of prayer. They will read the holy Scriptures to their children and domestics. They will endeavour to instruct them in the knowledge of the way of salvation, and of their duties to God and man. Their wish and aim will be, that "no sinful person may dwell in their house;" they will resolve, with the pious king of Israel, if they can accomplish their wish; "He that leadeth a godly life, he shall be my servant." If, my brethren, those of you, who have servants are not thus endeavouring by instruction, influence and example, to be instruments of God in the salvation of their souls, be assured that you are sinning against God and them, in an awful and dangerous degree. If they perish in ignorance, which you have not diligently endeavoured to remove; or in sins which you have never reprov'd, nay which, possibly, you may have occasioned or strengthened by your example, those servants will die in their iniquity, but their blood the Lord will require at your hands.

It appears, then, that no man can, in the just and most important sense of the term, be a good master, whose heart is not under the powerful influence of christian principles. And

brethren, but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit" of salvation through Christ, "that the name and doctrine of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed."

Again, *diligence* and industry are the acknowledged duty of those servants, who act from conscience and as in the sight of God. What can more strongly prove the absence of the fear of God, nay the want of a principle of common honesty, than the manner in which many servants and labourers conduct themselves, when the eye of their employer is not upon them. A truly honest and conscientious person will just act the same, whether any or no man is near. He knows that God is present with him, whose wrath he dreads, whose favor he values more than life. The grace of God disposes him "to do to others what," on exchange of condition, "he would wish them to do to him." He therefore serves, "not with eye-service, as a man-pleaser, but as the servant of Christ his Saviour, doing the will of God from the heart, with good-will doing service, as to the Lord and not to men."

Servants, the Lord also requires of you that you be *faithful* to those you serve. This is a most material part of a servant's duty, and very

much transgressed. A servant, an apprentice or any one confidentially employed, is a wicked, unprincipled deceiver and cheat, if he waste his master's property by carelessness or extravagance; if he take to himself, or dispose of to others, what he has no right to, even though it may seem of no great value or even useless to his employer; if he do not, in every lawful way in his power, endeavour to promote his master's interest as he would his own; or if he know his employer to be injured, and conceal the injury from him. "Exhort servants, not to purloin, but to shew all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things." Let me then earnestly entreat all servants who hear me, to examine faithfully your past character and conduct, by the duties, which I have set before you, from the word of God.—Wherever you discover that you have been wanting in contentment, submission, respect, diligence and faithfulness, let the discovery convict you of sin before God against this commandment. Let it convince you that you need the atonement of your Redeemer's blood to cleanse your guilt away. Let it lead you, in your blessed Saviour's name, to implore mercy of God for the past, and to pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit to give you

a new heart and holy principles. Then, blessed with the power of a divine faith, a sense of God's love and a hope of his glory, you will be disposed cheerfully, conscientiously and faithfully, to "do your duty in that state of life, unto which it has pleased God to call you."

Most important reciprocal duties arise out of several other relations of life: time will only allow me this evening, to advert, and that briefly to the duties which subsist between *ministers* and their *people*.

A minister of God's word has entered on a office, which for dignity, difficulty and responsibility, has no equal. He is the servant of the living God.—He is the ambassador of Christ, sent to this fallen, rebellious, condemned world, with the ministry of reconciliation committed to him. He is commissioned to make known the holiness, justice and mercy of God; to warn sinners of their guilt, danger and misery; to preach Jesus Christ to them, in the glory of his person, the riches of his love and pity to us, the perfection of his righteousness and atonement, and the power of his grace; to declare, that God in Christ has "reconciled the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," and to beseech penitent sinners to trust in the Redeemer, and be reconciled to

God; "that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ." By his ordination vows, he solemnly binds himself, as a messenger, to be diligent; as a watchman, to be vigilant; as a steward, to be faithful; as a shepherd, to feed the Lord's family committed to his charge. The souls of his parish are at stake, and he will have to account solemnly to God, for his ministerial conduct towards every individual in it. If any perish through his negligence, misconduct or unfaithfulness, he must answer for it. This is the solemn charge which the Lord gives by his prophet Ezekiel, and which should make every careless, unfaithful minister tremble for his own soul; "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman over the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." Brethren, what minister, who believes the bible he preaches, who has any love for Christ, any sense of the value of an immortal soul, any

compassion for sinful men, any anxiety for his own future safety, any conscience, any principle of integrity and honesty in his breast, can hear such a charge, and not feel his awful responsibility? Who shall dare to shun to declare the whole counsel of God, in all its parts and in its just proportions? Who would be found guilty of the murder of souls, by suppressing the truth, or "handling the word of God deceitfully?" If, my dear brethren, we desire to save ourselves and those that hear us, we must not heal the wounds of their consciences falsely, by "speaking peace to them, when there is no peace." We must lay open to their view the deep depravity of our fallen nature. We must labour to convince them of their own personal sins, that they may be humbled before God, and stirred up to "flee from the wrath to come." We must then point them to the cross of Christ, and to the free pardon, love and grace of God purchased by his precious blood. Knowing the justice and the terrors of the Lord, we must persuade and encourage the contrite sinner to believe in Jesus Christ, and to seek the remission of his sins and the sanctification of his heart. We must shew to the professing christian, how "the grace of God, which has brought salvation to his soul, teaches him to

deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." Our public stated labours we must discharge with seriousness of spirit, with faithfulness in doctrine and simplicity of language, with kindness of manner, and "soundness of speech which cannot be condemned, rightly dividing the word of truth."—But if we wish to shew ourselves approved of God as faithful pastors, our labours among you must not be confined to the pulpit. A good shepherd, not only feeds his sheep that collect around him, but will seek out those that still wander from the fold; the diseased he will endeavour to strengthen; the sick to heal, and to seek that which was lost. An Apostle commands us not only to "preach the word, but to be instant in season and out of season, and to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine," accompanying all our efforts with fervent prayer, for the blessing of God's Holy Spirit upon them. And, lastly, we must neither be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, nor by unholy and unbecoming conduct, dishonor and injure his cause. Our daily care must be, if we wish God to make us useful in saving souls, to shew ourselves "patterns of good works, giving no offence in any thing that the ministry be not blamed."

Such, my dear hearers, is a hasty sketch of our duty to you.—And what is *your* duty towards us? It is briefly this. To receive us, not as fallible and imperfect men, as we are, and of like passions and infirmities as yourselves, but as the ambassadors of Christ, and stewards and dispensers of the mysteries and truths of God; to bear with our many defects; to countenance us in our arduous office; to hear us without partiality and prejudice; to receive our word, as far as it agrees with the Holy Scriptures, “not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of the living God;” to shew by your spirit and walk, that you have received it in the love and power of it; and to pray for us, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is treasured up all fulness of grace, would make us faithful and wise stewards, not “preaching ourselves but Jesus Christ the Lord;” and would pour down his abundant blessing on our labours.

Let me now, then, in the last place, entreat you all to examine well, whether you are discharging your duty, in your relation to those who labour among you in the ministry. Are you disposed to listen to those that are commissioned to speak to you the word of God, with seriousness, candor and simplicity of heart?

Do you hear our message from the Lord "with meekness, and receive it with pure affection?" —Or do any come rather to criticize than to profit—making invidious comparisons between one preacher and another, and fastidiously taking exceptions against the manner, or the style of your minister, as if he were an actor on a stage, and as if you had come to the house of God only to be pleased and amused? This is not the spirit of a christian hearer, and you are not to wonder if you be sent empty away.—Do any take offence at the plainness of speech and faithfulness of application, in which they are entreated to repent, and to turn from sin and the world to the living and true God, that they may be saved? If you consider the necessity that is laid upon us, and the woe that is denounced, if we preach not the Gospel; and if you give us any credit for sincerity in the expressions of our concern for your immortal happiness, your displeasure will be changed into surprize, that we are so cold and formal; that our labours are not more abundant; and that, in the strong language of an Apostle, we do not "travail in birth for our people, till Christ be formed in them." The most earnest, faithful and devoted of the Lord's ministers most sensibly feel how much they have need to implore his mercy and

forbearance towards them. They are well convinced that it is not for an excess, but a want of zeal in the cause of Christ and of souls, that they have to look for indulgence from their people and pardon from their God. Brethren, while it becomes *us* solemnly to take heed how and what we speak, it is *yours* to take heed, how you hear. "He that despiseth us, despiseth him that sent us." Pray, then, each sabbath morning, before you come into the house of God, that he will incline you, by his Holy Spirit, to "receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls." Let the glorious gospel of Christ sink deep into your hearts, and so produce in you the fruits of faith and holiness, that they who watch over you and must give an account at the last day, may do it "with joy and not with grief;" that they may not have the distressing task of being "swift witnesses against you" to your destruction; but that you may be their "crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming."

Finally, brethren, we beseech you pray for us, that we may be endowed with every necessary gift and grace; that we may "do the work of an Evangelist well," and both by life and doctrine, "make full proof of our ministry."

Pray that they, who have been this day set apart to the sacred office,* may go to their respective charges "in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ." Pray that the number of faithful labourers in the Lord's vineyard, may soon be multiplied a thousand fold. Pray that the kingdom of our Redeemer may be speedily erected in all places, where "Satan's seat" now is; that real believers may be edified in knowledge, faith, hope, peace and holiness; and that millions, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation and language, may be added to Christ's real church, of such as shall be everlastingly saved.

* This sermon was preached on the evening of the day, when an Ordination had been held at Bishopthorpe, by the truly venerable Archbishop of York.

SERMON IX.

THE FOURTH ON THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 12.

*Honor thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long
upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

IN explaining the Christian duties which God requires of his people under this extensive commandment, I have already noticed the principal of such as have reference to families, and to the church of Christ. Those only now remain for our consideration which bear on the relations of *civil* life, and on some subordinate connections between individuals in society.

A mutual obligation, of great importance, and in which we are all concerned, lies between *rulers* and *subjects*. I shall endeavour to state

to you the duties of each, especially of subjects, as more immediately bearing upon ourselves. Let not any of my hearers be alarmed; I mean not to preach a political sermon. I shall only endeavour to shew what the word of God describes to be the duty of a christian ruler and a christian subject, be the existing form of government what it may.—Had man been possessed of his primitive innocence, and disposed to love God with all his heart, and his fellow-creature as himself; had sin not planted in his fallen nature the seeds of pride, ambition, selfishness, covetousness, malice, envy, hatred, cruelty, together with a legion of sensual depravities, governments and laws would not have been so necessary to restrain the vile and protect the helpless. As human nature now is, without authority in states, in cities and in families, society could not exist; order, peace and security would be banished from the earth. In every age and country, therefore, except among pure savages, the necessity for some kind of government has been confessed. God has not determined in his word, what should be its precise form; that is left to circumstances and to human choice. But it is his will, as the wise and gracious Lord of all, that civil authority should exist under some form. And as all

things, that take place on earth, are under the direction or permission of his providence, wherever a government is established, while it exists, and till they, who are competent, undertake, by legitimate means, to alter it, it is to be considered and respected as God's sovereign appointment. Hence we read, that "there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God."—Civil rulers are either such as are chief in authority, or magistrates, who act under that authority. Let us first trace the duty of each, and then our duty to them.

The chief ruler in our land, is the king, possessed, however, of but limited power. The two houses of parliament are associated with him, in the enactment of laws; and together with him constitute the great legislative supremacy of the land.

Now it is the duty of our legislature from time to time to make, alter and repeal laws for the public good. It is the duty of the supreme ruler, not to use his power for gratifying his own pride and ambition, but to consult the real interests and happiness of his subjects, to govern them with wisdom, justice and mercy, to punish evil doers, and to countenance and protect and employ them that do well. As a christian monarch, he should endeavour to

promote the honor of God, and the advancement and security of true religion in his realms; and by his example and influence, like David, Hezekiah, and Josias; like the late venerable George the third; and may I not add, like our present amiable and beloved Sovereign, he should “ever seek God’s honor and glory, and study to preserve the people committed to his charge in wealth, peace and godliness.”—It is equally the duty of *inferior magistrates* to exert the authority, with which they are invested, “for the suppression of wickedness and vice, and for the maintainance of true religion and virtue.” Such a magistrate is a public blessing. “When the righteous are in authority the people,” the virtuous part of the community “rejoice,” and vice is appalled; but “when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn,” and depravity in its most loathsome forms, comes forth with unblushing front, to disgust and to corrupt, in open day.

If a magistrate content himself with punishing and putting down those crimes only, which affect the lives or property of men, but take no steps, by putting the laws in force, to suppress sabbath-breaking, profaneness, intemperance, and lewdness, he betrays his trust in the service of God and of society, and God will bring him

to judgment for bearing the magisterial sword in vain.

But we proceed to the duty of *subjects*.—In the word of God, from which a real christian is willing, with profound submission, to learn his civil and political obligations, as well as all his other duties, the general rule for a subject's conduct is stated in terms sufficiently clear and express: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." The Holy Scriptures also define the reason and principle on which that submission is founded. We are to be subject, not merely because some kind of government appears to us to be expedient for the public good and our own; or because we dread the punishment of disobedience, or the danger of national disturbance or calamity, should the government of our country be overturned; but we are to yield subjection and obedience to our rulers, as an act of religious resignation and submission to the providence of God.—"The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation." "Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath (that is, through dread of loss and punishment) but also for conscience' sake."

As a general rule, then, unquestionably, obedience to government is an express scripture duty; and every one, who respects the word of God, will be a dutiful subject to his government; he who fears God, will *honor the king*.—But it is asked: Does the word of God insist on thorough passive obedience? Is there no limitation to this duty, no exception to this law? If acts of oppression and encroachment on my civil liberties be attempted, am I tamely to acquiesce? If overwhelming public burthens be imposed, or if my privileges and rights, in matters of religion, be invaded, am I silently to bear them? If another form of government appear to me preferable, may I not try to remove the worse, to make way for the better?—The proper answers to such questions seem to be these:

1. It is not only right, but perhaps a public duty, if aggrieved, to adopt lawful and peaceable measures for redress; but then,

2. If every individual were at liberty to rise up against the laws and government of his country, whenever they may appear to be contrary to his notions of equity and right, it would follow that every individual was at liberty to erect himself into a judge, not only on the conduct of his rulers, but also on the suitableness of

the laws; on such a principle, every individual in the nation would be entitled to determine for himself, when to obey, when to disobey; and the stability of all government would be at an end.

3. All *violent* measures are, doubtless, the very resistances which the scriptures condemn as sin and rebellion against God.

4. The real christian will be the last to complain, censure and resist. He knows that it is foolish to expect perfection on earth: no man can reasonably demand it in others, till he first exhibit it in himself. A sincere follower of Christ, therefore, no more expects the rulers and laws of his land to be faultless, than any other man or work of man. If aggrieved, he considers that God may be pleased to exercise his faith, patience and resignation in this way as well as any other.—The kingdom of his blessed Lord, and his own chief treasure are not of this world; and he is more disposed to view, and to bless God for, the many undeserved privileges and mercies civil and religious, which he enjoys, than to be restless under the few light things which he might wish to be otherwise. And this leads to the further obvious remark, that of all communities in the world, that have been, or that are, real christians under the

British constitution have the least cause for dissatisfaction, the largest reasons for contentment and for gratitude to God. What other subject ever enjoyed such security in property, freedom of person, and liberty of conscience? If then to any people upon earth the command of the inspired Apostle applies, it applies to Britons: "Put them in mind that they be subject to principalities and powers." And the force of this command will derive, if possible, additional weight, from considering the time and circumstances under which it was uttered. The first disciples of Jesus were not dwelling under the gentle and protecting sceptre of a christian prince. The brutal Nero was at that time destroying them, by hundreds under every variety of torture, which savage ingenuity could invent; and yet it is admitted, that there is no proof on record of any disaffected sentiments among the primitive converts. And surely those christians were actuated by the true spirit of scriptural obedience to God, who, about two hundred years after Christ, made to the Emperor and to the world, by their pastor, the following declaration: "We pray for the Emperor, for the ministers of state, for the prosperity of the age, for the quietness of affairs, and for the continuance of their lives

and government; that God would give them a long life, a secure reign, an undisturbed house, powerful armies, faithful senators, honest subjects, a quiet people, and indeed, whatever they can wish for as men and princes."

I would now request you, my dear hearers, each to examine, how far, and on what principles, you are discharging this important relative duty. Are you cheerfully yielding subjection to the king as supreme; and that in obedience to the will and command of God, under whose providence government exists, the king reigns, and the blessings of social life are secured to you? We have the happiness, at present, to live in quietness and peace, you know it has not always been so. The nation is just now blest with uncommon prosperity; with abundant commerce, fruitful seasons and favourable harvests; and streams of plenty carry subsistence and comfort down into every corner and cottage of the kingdom.* No wonder, then, that there is no commotion in the country, "no complaining in our streets." We are not, however to attribute our tranquillity, I fear, to any great religious improvement in the great body of

* Little did the preacher or the people, at the time, apprehend the sudden reverse, which now afflicts the nation!

the people. When God saw fit, lately to visit us with public distress and calamity, for our national sin and ungodliness; then clamour and disloyalty, faction and treason, disgraced and distracted the land. But amidst all this, might not our rulers have pleaded in the words of Moses and Aaron; "your murmuring is not against us, but against the Lord."—It originated, in truth, in a spirit of rebellion against the God of providence: the proof of which was the awful fact, that infidelity, and blasphemy against God and against his Christ, went hand in hand with disaffection to Government; the spirit of the day breathed opposition and defiance to all authority of God and man. And can we doubt that a return of such trying times would revive the same spirit, language and outrage in men of corrupt, unhumbled and ungodly minds? Brethren, let this teach us, that nothing but christian principle can ensure a conscientious discharge of this and every relative duty. Pride and self-will must be subdued. The love of God and man must be implanted in the heart by the Holy Spirit;—the soul must be humbled and transformed at the foot of the cross; it must there be crucified with Christ to the power of sinful passions and to the inordinate love of the world; the will

must be brought into subjection to the will of God, and the affections fixed on heaven ; then it will be as easy to “render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, as unto God the things which are God’s.” Oh then let us seek, from the God of all grace, more of the heavenly mind of Christ, and of the primitive christians, that we may be able to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in this, as in every other branch of holy obedience.—If, my brethren, you possess the spirit of christian subjects, you will shew it in the following particulars: You will honor and respect the king in his person and government, and all that are put in authority under him as magistrates for the punishment of evildoers. You will not imitate the “presumptuous and self-willed,” who “despise dominion, nor are afraid to speak evil of dignities,” and to revile the rulers of God’s people. You will treat their infirmities, frailties and errors with the same tenderness and candour, which a good son would exercise towards his father. You will make a conscience of contributing all that the laws claim of you, in support of government and the administration of public affairs;—“rendering to all their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honor, to whom

honor." And lastly, you will not cease to pray for your king and his government, according to the direction of the Apostle: "I exhort, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority; that under them we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."

There now remain only the relative duties subsisting between *individuals*, as *inferiors*, *superiors* and *equals*; these my time compels me to specify in a brief manner.

Ye younger in years, it is your beseeming duty to give honor and respect to age. Age attains, or ought to attain, to experience, wisdom, sound principles and good conduct; and "the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."—Your's is the season of strong passion, weak reason, forward self-confidence and ill-informed judgment.—You should, therefore, hearken to the voice of age, resolving with young Elihu; "Days shall speak to me, and multitude of years shall teach me wisdom." In the Levitical law it was enjoined; "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of an old man, and

fear thy God: I am the Lord." And though infirmity of body or mind be come upon him, still it is your duty, especially if he is your parent or relative, to treat him with tenderness, and not to abate your reverence and cheerful attention to him.

Ye, who are advanced in years, hold an important relation to the young that are around you, They, under God, will, in a great measure be what you make them by your influence and and example."—With this view, St. Paul requires that "aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience." If any of you, though far advanced in years, are destitute of religious knowledge, thoughtless about your souls, ignorant of Christ, and of a work of grace on your hearts; if, though grey hairs and growing infirmities mark you out as sure and early victims of death, you are still exhibiting the thoughtless levity of youth, still given up to a life of covetousness and earthly care, or of worldly pleasure and sensuality, without repentance, without prayer, without the love of God, without every preparative for death and for heaven, you are not only deliberately destroying your own soul, but doing all you can to draw down all within your sphere to endless misery after you.—My

dear aged hearers, if you have any love to Christ, any zeal for God, any feeling for immortal souls, let it be your daily study, so to employ the evening of your life, that you may leave not a curse, but a blessing on the next generation, and through it on generations yet unborn.

I proceed to inferiors in *rank* and *circumstances* in life. Brethren, when tempted to discontentment with your lot, remember that it is God, who has placed you where you are. Envy not, then, them that are above you, but honor those on whom God has put honor. Think not that a man must be happy, because he rolls in plenty and shines in splendor. A coronet, or a crown cannot guard from anxiety, vexation, affliction and disease, nor cure a broken heart. Rank and wealth are great snares, and surrounded with vehement temptations to love the world and forget God, so that it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Seek, then, to be rich in faith, in the graces of the Holy Spirit, in the peace of God, and in the blessed hope of eternal life; then will you possess that which princes may soon envy, and without which the greatest will be mean, and the richest poor indeed.

Superiors in wealth, rank, authority and

learning, occupy in society a station of vast responsibility. God has put talents of great influence into their hands; of them, therefore, much will be required. Their example is extensively felt, and operates powerfully among their families, connections, servants and dependents.—When men of weight and distinction are men of piety and holy living; when they worship God in their houses, sanctify his sabbaths, discountenance vice and ungodliness, and promote the cause of Christ and of spiritual religion in their spheres, the happiest effects are discernible; they become eminent servants of God, public blessings, true patriots, real friends and benefactors of their country and of their kind.—But when, unhappily, their influence is thrown into the opposite scale; when the worship and acknowledgment of God are banished from their dwellings, and real religion treated with contempt; when the Lord's day is profaned by visits, travelling, pleasure and conviviality, and their poor servants are kept away from the house of God, to make the sabbath a day of labour and dissipation of mind; what is to be expected, through the wide range of their malignant influence and example, but ignorance, ungodliness and vice! Who can con-

template the manners of many of the great, imitated, alas ! to an alarming extent by their inferiors, especially their mode of employing the appointed day of holy rest, as it is weekly proclaimed through the country in our public prints, and not exclaim with just apprehension : “ Will not God visit us for these things, and will not his soul be avenged on a nation ” so favoured, so ungrateful, so wicked as this ?

Lastly, as *equals*, my christian hearers, being the adopted children of the same Father, members of the same Saviour, subjects of the same Spirit, fellow-sufferers under the same trials and weaknesses, fellow-soldiers against the same enemies, fellow-heirs of the same glory, you owe a daily duty to each other. If the Spirit of God has renewed your hearts, and the love of Christ has expanded your affections, you will take a lively interest in the welfare, particularly in the eternal welfare of all around you. Towards all, you will cultivate a spirit of love, tenderness, candour, kindness, meekness and patience; you will “ bear one another’s burthens and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

Such, my brethren are the principal relative duties, which we owe to each other, and which every truly regenerate, justified believer in Jesus will conscientiously and cheerfully endeavour to

perform. We cannot reflect on them and on ourselves, without being deeply sensible, how lamentably we have failed in every one. We must be convinced, that not by "works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy God must save us;" that we must be "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," if ever we be justified at all. But, at the same time, that we trust in the atonement and righteousness of Jesus Christ alone for acceptance with God, as unprofitable and sinful servants, yet if we are in a state of salvation, we shall as earnestly endeavour, and as fervently seek the aid of the Holy Spirit to enable us, to discharge all the duties of the christian life, as if our title to heaven, and our sentence at the last day, wholly depended on our performance of them. In that case the double petition annexed by our church to the repetition of each commandment, will express the sincere feeling and prayer of our souls on a review of the extensive contents of this: "Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law."

SERMON X.
THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus xx. 18.

Thou shalt not kill.

WE cannot too often renew the impression on our minds, that the ten commandments of God, were given to us his fallen, sinful creatures, for two ends : first, that being powerfully impressed by his Holy Spirit on our consciences, they should convince us of our guilt and danger, and so prepare us to seek his pardoning mercy, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ : and secondly, that we being thus justified by faith, and having peace with God, they should be the model and rule, by which we should endeavour, through the help of his grace, to form our hearts and lives to his glory. —We must also bear in mind the solemn truth, as affirmed by our blessed Lord himself in his

explanation of this commandment,* that the eternal law of God not only takes cognizance of our words and actions, but extends to our thoughts, tempers, appetites, passions and motives. We must further recollect, that real religion does not consist in negatives; not to have committed actual sin, is not to be positively holy: consequently, when the law of God forbids any sin, it thereby requires and commands that christian grace or action which is opposite to the sin forbidden.

With these preparatory remarks, we proceed to the consideration of the sixth commandment.

The four first commandments detail the renewed, justified christian's duty to God in love, trust, submission, service and worship. The fifth contains our various duties to our fellow-creatures arising from our several relations in life. We now come to the duties which man owes to man generally, in doing him no harm, and promoting his good. And as life is the most valuable of all possessions, this commandment guards the life: "Thou shalt not kill." This, like all the rest, will be found to be exceedingly broad. If the Lord be pleased to

* See Matt. v. 21, 22.

dispose us to try ourselves faithfully by it, horrible as is an act of murder, and detestable as is the person and character of a murderer, we shall all find that even under this commandment we have great reason to implore of God for Christ's sake, "to have mercy upon us." This commandment condemns as sin, as a degree and species of murder, whatever has a direct or indirect tendency to injure the natural and spiritual life of ourselves or others; and by implication, enjoins what has a tendency to preserve them. I shall

I. Notice the sins which have in them the nature of murder on the *natural* and *bodily* life of ourselves or others:

II. Those which injure the *spiritual* life, the health and salvation of the soul.

I. We take first those sins which affect our own lives.

The sin expressly condemned in this case, is *suicide*, self-murder. When committed by a person not decidedly insane, it is an act of such daring rebellion against God, as, from the spirit and temper which resolve upon it, and from its leaving no room for repentance, had the wretched being committed no other sins, seems effectually to cut him off from all possibility of salvation. Our lives belong to him who gave

them. He formed us for his own glory. He has planted in our breasts an instinctive love of life and dread of death. He wills that we abide in life, till he see fit to call us hence. We may therefore, no more cut short our own life, than that of another man's; for in fact, it is not our own, but God's. But it is not necessary, to constitute the sin of self-murder, that suicide be committed at one act.—If a man bring death upon himself, it makes no difference in the guilt, by what means he brings it on, or how long he is in effecting it; nor whether he mean to destroy his life or no, if death be the natural obvious consequence of his actions. What then is the conduct of the person, who yields to excessive grief and distress of mind under any cross or affliction, who pines away under disappointed pride and ambition, or anxious worldly cares, or who exhausts his bodily strength with excessive labour, and watchfulness; what is such a person's conduct but a kind of self-destruction?—All intemperance in the indulgence of the appetites has in it the nature of self-murder. If we *eat* to excess, in variety or quantity, the body is oppressed, not refreshed; and if this be habitually done, the powers both of body and mind are weakened, and disease and early death are the usual con-

sequence. *Drunkenness* is a most deliberate and effectual kind of suicide. A drunkard is not impelled to destroy himself by some sudden violence of passion, as Judas by a distracted conscience, or Saul by the agonies of despair ; but as if coolly determined on his fatal purpose, though he knows that "no murderer has eternal life abiding in him," and that he is destroying soul and body at once, he repeats the poisonous draught, and seldom desists till death puts a period to his excesses. And here, we must not confine the remark to those only who drink to actual intoxication. Whenever this indulgence is carried to excess, the effects and the sinfulness are proportionate. The convivial man, who is in the habit of taking more than the rules of temperance require, though never drunk, is still a drunkard ; and disease and untimely death number him with self-destroyers. If, then, brethren, we would escape the misery of a broken constitution, a tormenting conscience, a premature old age, or an early, sudden and hopeless death, and the curse of God denounced against murderers, we must abstain from excessive indulgences, and "keep our bodies in temperance, soberness and chastity." We must seek our enjoyments in spiritual consolations. We must have our

hearts at once cheered and refined by divine love, by a purifying faith in Christ Jesus, and by the sublimating expectation of heavenly glory. Our confidence and our portion must be in God as our Father in Christ. We shall then be able to cast our trials and sorrows upon him, and be delivered from wasting care and fretful anxiety.—Having “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” as our righteousness and example, we shall “not make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” We shall be enabled, by God’s grace, to keep under the body, and all tormenting sensual passions; we shall not make “a god of our belly;” we shall “not be drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the spirit,” and shall find “godliness profitable, for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

2. The taking away the life of a *fellow-creature* is expressly forbidden. Deliberate murder is, by the laws of almost every civilized country, punished with death, agreeably to the divine decree: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” Of wilful direct murder, but few are guilty; and was not the commandment of more extensive import, few of us, if any, would have need to adopt the response as applicable to ourselves: “Lord

have mercy upon me." But, as in the case of self-destruction, a man may be actually guilty of murdering another, though he do not effect his death at once, and though he may have no direct desire or intention of taking away life, if he do that which is known to have a tendency to affect and destroy life. Though he does not commit intentional murder on his neighbour's person, yet if by his conduct, influence or example, he contribute to injure that person's health, or to shorten his days, so far as he produces this effect, he is guilty of murder. If then, instead of contributing, when in our power, to the reputation, comfort and prosperity of those around us, we withhold what is due, when in our power to give: if by hard-hearted covetousness we suffer them to pine in want and disease; if we wound their character, and blast their peace, by slander and misrepresentation, or vex them by persecution and oppression, and thereby embitter their days, injure their health, and shorten their existence, we are far from being guiltless under this law.

If any of you are in the habit (and such a habit, it is well known, prevails much in this city) of meeting others, and running with them into excessive and intemperate conviviality, you are partakers in each others sins—and if any of your

partners in such irregularities, have fallen victims to the effects of that intemperance, you share with them in the guilt of the ruin brought on their bodies and souls. In such a case, your conscience ought to smite you with anguish. Except your sin be repented of in deep contrition, and washed away in the blood of Jesus, the Lord God will certainly not acquit you, on the day of judgment, of deliberate, and, therefore, of aggravated murder. This may appear a strained application of the law of God to those who have not considered its spirituality and extent. But if the Lord himself may be allowed to interpret his own word, the commandment reaches much farther still; for he declares that certain tempers and feelings of the heart, even when they are not suffered to break out into action at all, have in them the character and guilt of murder. "Ye have heard," says our Lord, "that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill:" and you imagine that this only extends to the case of actual murder: but "I say unto you, that whoso is *angry* with his brother without a cause;" whoso is guilty of rash and excessive anger, "shall be in danger of the judgment." Equal in guilt and danger, are represented the other infernal tempers of hatred, malice and

envy. When St. Paul specifies the deadly sins of wicked and reprobate minds, he classes these tempers and murders together: "being full of envy, murder, debate, malignity." St. John expressly affirms that "who-soever hateth his brother," any man living, "is a murderer." The reason is plain, he that is angry at, and hates another in his heart, so as to wish him evil, would do him evil, if he could and durst.—One man cannot see the heart of another, otherwise human courts would take cognizance of the heart, and the criminal would be judged by his intentions, not his actions. But God is a searcher of hearts, and consequently the mind that has indulged feelings of rancorous hatred will be found *guilty* at the last day, though no act of violence has been committed. Indeed it is by these vile tempers working in the human breast, that any one is impelled to attack the peace, character or life of another; so that if there is envy, malice or rage in the heart, it is murder begun.—It is to the influence of such diabolical passions that we must ascribe the monstrous practice of duelling. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders." Before Cain slew Abel, he was wroth in his heart, and his countenance fell. Esau hated Jacob in his heart, and in his intention mur-

dered him; though prevented, by want of opportunity, from executing his purpose. It was a settled grudge, in which the heart of Herodias had long rankled, that moved her to instruct her daughter to ask the head of John the Baptist, rather than half of Herod's kingdom.—My brethren, if this is the just extent and bearing, which the Lord Jesus himself has assigned to this law, who is here among us, whose conscience does not pronounce him an offender? Which of our hearts has not often swelled with anger, pined with envy, burned with resentment and thirsted for revenge? Surely, then, it becomes us to confess that we are guilty, and to deplore our sinfulness before God. Surely we have cause to cry out in agony of soul, with David, when conscience accused him of the indirect murder of Uriah: "O God," for Christ's sake, "wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin: Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation."

Hitherto I have confined our attention to sins committed against the *body*; but there is also a murder of the *soul*; and who that believes that the immortal spirit of man must be in glory or torments for ever, does not feel it infinitely more dreadful to be accessory to the

destruction of the soul than of mortal life? Now since under the effects of the fall, our souls are involved in corruption and guilt through original sin; since we have all brought upon ourselves, by numberless actual transgressions, the wrath of God and the condemnation of his law,—it follows that without the pardon of our sins and the purification of our hearts, we must perish eternally. But there is plenteous redemption and free mercy in Christ for every penitent believer, and by “the inspiration of the Holy Spirit” our polluted, degenerate hearts can be cleansed and renewed, and the love of God and a capacity for heavenly bliss can be restored.—If then we despise and reject this great salvation, we become the destroyers of our souls. The man, that under the light of the gospel, stubbornly fortifies himself against the terrors and mercies of God; that walks after the devices and desires of a worldly, sensual, ungodly heart; that does not apply to Jesus Christ the great physician of souls, to relieve him from guilt by his atoning blood, to cleanse him from sin by his Holy Spirit, and to plant and cherish a principle of divine and holy life within him, that man is deliberately guilty of the murder of his soul. It is in this spiritual sense, that our Lord calls Satan a murderer.

By drawing men into sin and rebellion against God, he was a "murderer from the beginning of the world." And all who abide in sin and separation from God, act under his destructive influence, and accomplish his malignant purpose in their own eternal ruin. Oh, my brethren, is not the very thought, that we should be conspiring with him against the eternal safety of our souls insupportably terrifying? Then let us see to it, that our blood be not on our own heads; that we have renounced the inward love and outward practice of all that wars against the soul. Have we seriously fled to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith, to blot out by his blood those countless sins, the wages of each of which is death? And, being made free from the dominion and guilt of sin and become the justified sons and servants of God, are we bringing forth those fruits of holiness which mark our end to be eternal life? Brethren, if this be not our state and character, we are assuredly in the road to eternal death, and our destruction will be chargeable entirely on ourselves. Our judge will then say to us: "You would not come to me, that you might have life."

But we may be guilty of sealing the ruin of the *souls* of *others*, as well as of our own; and

this solemn truth ought, I fear, to lead many, if not all of us, to a train of reflections, that should fill their hearts with keen remorse, and their tongues with earnest supplications for mercy.

There was a period (may that period be past with all here present) when we lived carelessly, “walking after the course of this world, under the spirit which still works in the children of disobedience.”—What was then the effect of our conversation, influence and example on others? Did we not join them, in encouraging each other in a course of ungodliness, vanity and sin; in contempt of God’s word and worship, perhaps in ridiculing religion and religious characters; in perverting each others minds and inflaming their passions? Have we never in the presence of others, spoken words that might do their souls hurt? Is there no individual, who has been encouraged and confirmed by us in unscriptural opinions, or in an impenitent and sinful life; or deterred by our scoffs and ridicule, or by fear of our injuring his worldly interests, from embracing and confessing the faith of Christ crucified, and entering into the kingdom of God? Perhaps some, thus injured by us are dead, and died as they lived; and others are living without thought or care

for their souls; impenitent, unpardoned, unfit to die! In such distressing cases, can we forbear to exclaim, in agony of spirit, "Had it not been for me, such an one might have been a different character! Had I not prejudiced, perverted, corrupted or encouraged him in his iniquity and unbelief, he might have been serving God on earth, in the number of Christ's flock, or if dead, he might have been reigning with him in heaven! And it becomes all professors of religion to reflect, if any near relatives or friends are still hardened in sin and contempt of serious religion, how far they may have contributed to this, by the defects of their own character and conduct.—And after all our consideration, we shall never be able to estimate either all the good effects which a godly man's example and influence, through God's blessing upon them, may produce; or the extent of the bad effects of our lives before, or of our defects and faults, since we became the followers of Christ. A sinner, in proportion to his influence and the degree of his offending, may ruin the souls of his family, connections, and of his and their offspring through many future ages! Thousands of every generation, to the end of time, will bless God in heaven, that St. Paul lived and wrote; as many thousands in torment

will curse the day that Voltaire and Paine were born.

When we pray, my brethren, with the self-abased Psalmist, "Lord remember not the sins of my youth" and ignorance, what reason have we all earnestly to intercede, that for our blessed Redeemer's sake, no one may perish through any fault of ours. How ought we to watch and pray, that we may be to no one "an occasion of falling" or of continuing in sin. If our best motives are liable to be misinterpreted, and our infirmities and imperfections to be magnified into serious crimes by a perverse generation, in order to quiet their consciences and give them peace in their sins, how constantly and fervently should we beseech God, to enable us to walk circumspectly, and to give no just cause of offence in any thing. On this principle, we shall often find it expedient to abstain from things, which in themselves might be lawful and harmless, that we may not wound the conscience of a weak believer, or give any sanction to a careless and ungodly world.—And if we are truly humbled before God, for the injury which any part of our past life may have done to the souls of others, we shall be anxious for the future to be instruments of good to all around us. For the sake

of others, as well as ourselves, we shall be careful "to redeem the time." We shall feel the force of our Lord's charge to Peter: "when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Lastly, since it appears that sin is the great enemy to the health and real comfort of the body, as well as to the spiritual life and eternal happiness of the soul; since the sins of anger, malice and revenge prompt men to assail the life of others, and the sins of pride and intemperance to destroy their own; and since inordinate care and covetousness, and sinful pleasures embitter and shorten our days, and launch the soul out of a comfortless mortality into a hopeless and miserable eternity, how can we, if the Lord has blessed us with a better taste and happier prospects in Christ Jesus; how can we sufficiently pity those that are yet the servants of sin! Well may we ask them: "What fruit have you in those things of which you will soon be ashamed, for the end of these things is death." Oh, if God would open your eyes on approaching death, judgment and eternity; if you knew what it was to possess "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and to have victory over the world and sin and yourself; to enjoy communion with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ,

through the Spirit ; and to have the sure and elevating hope of a blessed resurrection to eternal life, you would not persist to be the murderers of your present peace, and of your future prospects ; but would flee to Christ for justification and life, for holiness, happiness and heaven.

SERMON XI.
THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 14.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

THE preceding commandment forbids whatever might injure our own life, or that of another. In this, the Lord God proceeds to guard an institution established by himself, before man became a sinner, for the peaceful and virtuous perpetuation of the human race, *marriage*.

It would have been well, if our common nature had not been so sensualized, and if the present age had not been so corrupt as to require, from the minister of God's word, full and distinct exposure of the crimes against which this divine law is enacted.—Our holy God could not more strongly shew his detestation of the sins we have now to consider, than by making them the subject of one command-

ment out of ten, and by placing it next in order to his law against murder. Every friend of morality, and of the cause of Christ and of goodness, in this congregation, would have rejoiced with me, if the chastity and purity of the present times had been such, as not to call for a full explanation and pointed application of the seventh commandment. But since the sins against this commandment are undoubtedly the crying sins of the present day, difficult and delicate as the faithful discussion of them is, nothing would excuse an expounder of God's word for shrinking from the task. Our blessed Lord entered fully and plainly into the subject, as an example for his ministers in every age.

I mean not, however, to go into a minute and descriptive detail of all the sins and abominations, against which the eternal curse of this law is denounced, lest while I endeavour to convict and alarm the guilty, I should gratify the polluted mind, and wound the chaste. Should any one sentiment uttered this evening, unhappily have that effect upon either, I can only say, that it is far from my design to occasion it. If any are disposed to be offended, or perverted by well intended and necessary truth, let them consider, whether they may not equally abuse or quarrel with the word of God itself. "To the pure all

things are pure ; but to them that are defiled" by a licentious practice or a depraved imagination, " nothing is pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled."—After all, though I shall feel it my duty to use great freedom and plainness of speech, much must be left to the conscience and private reflection of such of my hearers as may find themselves addressed and implicated. I shall


I. Treat upon the sins forbidden and condemned by this commandment ; omitting, however, some, " of which it is a shame even to speak :"—

II. I shall enumerate some of the principal temptations to these sins :—and

III. Point out the best means, through divine grace, of being preserved from the commission of them.

I. The sin against this commandment, which is first in enormity, and therefore properly specified as including all the rest, is *adultery*. Adultery is the defilement of the marriage bed either by two persons both married, or by a married with a single person.—Adultery presupposes marriage, which was instituted by God himself, and in which the parties devote themselves to each other for life, by a most solemn vow having all the obligation of an oath. An

adulterer, therefore, incurs the wrath of God and the sentence of his holy law, under both the third and seventh commandments, being at once guilty of perjury and lewdness.—Against no sin, is the heavy displeasure of God more strongly expressed in his word, than against this, and with good reason. If marriage secures the most important social, moral and religious benefits to individuals, to families and to the community at large, it is the tendency of this crime to defeat them all. It inflicts a fatal, an incurable wound on the peace of at least one innocent person. It exhibits the offender to God and man as the loathsome slave of sensuality and lust, sunk below the level of the brute creation, which are usually faithful to their mates. It brings discord and misery, dishonor and shame into families, and ought to be viewed with equal horror and disgust, when committed by the husband, as when by the wife. It is allowed that the unfaithfulness of a wife, especially if she is a mother, is attended, with peculiar mischief to society and to her children; but it must not be forgotten, that in the sight of God, the adulterer is as unpardonably infamous as the adulteress, and usually much more so, as being the tempter and seducer, uniting the malignity of the Devil



with the sensuality of the brute.—The laws of England, are enacted for the restraint of all kinds of vice. They punish, with death, however, those crimes only which strike immediately at the very existence of society. The adulterer and adulteress are not treated by the penal statutes, as capital offenders, but left to receive the reward of their abominations at the tribunal of God. Under the mosaic dispensation, he decreed concerning both parties, on detection, “that the adulterer and adulteress should surely be put to death.” And in his holy and eternal law of the ten commandments, he enacts with no less authority, “thou shalt not commit adultery,” than; “thou shalt not kill.” Let then, the base perjured man, who is living in the commission of this sin, measure his guilt and danger, not by the standard of the laws of his country, but of Almighty God. If he sees a reprobate assassin led to execution, let him say: “I am as wicked, as guilty as he. If my sins be not blotted out by the blood of Christ, and my polluted soul be not renewed by his Spirit, before I die, as hot a place is prepared in hell for me, as for the most blood-thirsty murderer that ever died.” Such a wretch exemplifies, how utterly inadequate the received laws of honor are for the regulation of human

conduct. A man, claiming the rank of a gentleman, if convicted of swindling and theft, loses his caste, and is doomed to contempt and infamy; but if he deliberately seduce an unthinking female, though the daughter or wife of his friend, he is still a man of honour, and allowed to mix as before, with what is called good society!

The sin next in atrocity condemned by our holy God in this commandment is *fornication*, committed by unmarried persons. This is as direct and deadly a sin against marriage and chastity as adultery, and has as heavy a curse of God upon it. "Marriage," says the Apostle, "is honourable and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." If so, the crime is the same, whether committed with many or with one, with a harlot or with a mistress. In the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians among other sins, which are called the "works of the flesh" are these: "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness," and it is added: "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." I shall cite but one passage more out of many, from Ephesians the fifth: "this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you

with vain words," (as if such a sin were a trifle) "for because of these things cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience."

But had the holy scriptures been silent on the eternal doom of fornicators, the evils and miseries, the depravity and wretchedness which they occasion, were sufficient to place their conduct among the blackest crimes. When we observe the swarms of wretched women that disgrace and pollute our city, what are we to think of the inhuman monsters who first drew them into, and contribute to their continuance in, the paths of sin and death. Each one of them was at first ruined by a base seducer. He must answer, on the day of judgment, not only for her sufferings in this world and the next, but also for all the souls which she may ruin in her turn. These pitiable outcasts, abandoned to want, shame and contempt, to vice, disease and death of body and soul, prowling for their prey, like agents of hell, what virtuous mind can contemplate but with feelings of horror and compassion. Surely such objects should be a warning to every thoughtless female, to take heed not to "forsake the guide of her youth, nor to forget the covenant of her God." Lost to society, to friends and to character, they have nothing before them but a life of infamy

and wretchedness, and a premature and hopeless death. Several of them, there is reason to believe, would gladly escape from their course of sin and misery, if the hand of christian compassion were stretched out to assist them.—I think this a fair opportunity of stating to my benevolent hearers, what may be unknown to many, that a Penitentiary is opened in a neighbouring town for receiving, employing, instructing, and reclaiming such of those unhappy females, as apply for refuge; and if they conduct themselves well, situations are found for them. A small society in this place has sent several to that house, at a considerable expence.* We have four in it now, and I could mention individuals, who have come out with every mark of true penitence, and are become excellent servants in respectable families. I hope this short allusion to the subject may induce some feeling hearts, especially of their own sex, to give us pecuniary support. And whilst in this way we endeavour to lessen the quantity of sin and misery occasioned by

* This Penitentiary at Hull, the author regrets to add, is discontinued for want of funds. A similar Institution, however, at Leeds, kindly allows the York society to send unhappy females thither, who exhibit marks of repentance and a desire to reform.

this vice, let all persons of respectability, who have any regard for the honor of God, the public morals, the prosperity of their country, the success of true religion and the welfare of the bodies and souls of others, agree to hold the fornicator in at least as strong abhorrence, as they hold the poor miserable destitute, who bereaved by him of her character, and of the means of regaining it, is left to woe, disease and destruction. Let him, who thus tramples on the law of God, and on the peace, virtue and happiness of the victim of his profligacy, be put to shame by the detestation of every man, and more especially of every woman of character. Let him be classed, not with men of honor but of infamy. Let him be detested and avoided as a pestilential nuisance, hated of God, and an outcast from men. St Paul writes to the Corinthians, not to associate with fornicators.—For prevailing sins of this description the judgments of God fell, more than once, on his ancient people, the Jews. We have been, and are a most favoured nation. But can we notice the numbers of prostitutes that infest our streets, and not perceive, that amidst our unparalleled prosperity, we have every reason to fear. God may justly, and if he mean to check the torrent of wickedness, except we repent, he must inevitably say, as he did of licentious

Judah, by his prophet Jeremiah: "Shall I not visit for these things, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

There is an offence against this commandment similar to the above, which prevails to an alarming extent, that must not be passed over, I mean *concubinage*; where a man cohabits with a woman that is not his wife. This is generally the practice of men of loose principles, profligate character, and expensive habits; and they attempt to defend themselves by the plea, that they cannot afford to keep an establishment, and that if the parties confine themselves to each other, there is little, if any difference between such a connection and marriage.— "But," asks a celebrated moralist, "if the situation of the parties be the same thing as marriage, why do they not marry?" And adds, "if the man choose to have it in his power to dismiss the woman at pleasure, or to retain her in a state of humiliation and dependence, inconsistent with the rights which marriage would confer upon her, it is not the same thing as marriage to her; and at any rate, it is not the same thing to the children." The fact is, that such a man lives thus, because it best suits his pride, selfishness, extravagance and licentiousness: and because he means, at his

pleasure, to cast off the deluded dupe of his base treachery to public prostitution and wretchedness. Such a connection, even though death only should separate the parties, is not marriage, which God has indissolubly established, because they reserve to themselves the power of dissolving it, but a deliberate violation of his command respecting it. In the eye of God, his concubine is a harlot ; he is an audacious fornicator, and the curse of this broken law rests upon his soul.

Broad and extensive as this commandment thus explained is, we are far from having yet taken a full view of its application. The law of God is spiritual, and like his own pure omniscient eye, penetrates into the inmost recesses of the soul. God looks at the heart, and when he discovers impurities there, the whole man, however decent his exterior, is defiled in his sight. Here then *we are all* deeply concerned ; for who can say, I have always made my heart clean ? The Lord Jesus Christ, while he affirmed, that “ whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,” declares also, that “ out of the corrupt heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries and fornications.” St. Peter speaks of those

who "have eyes full of lewdness, that cannot cease from sin." If, then, every unchaste thought, every irregular desire, is sufficient to defile us in the sight of God, and to expose us to the condemnation of this law, who can look back on his past life and say, that he is not guilty?—It concerns us all to be sincere and faithful in self-examination on this matter. The subject must be left to every person's own reflections.—Let every one diligently search into the past thoughts and workings of his heart, with earnest prayer to God for his illuminating spirit, to enable him to understand his secret faults, and with this rule of judgment in his hand: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," and I dare venture to pronounce, that every individual present will be convinced, that by sins against this commandment alone, he is a polluted, condemned sinner, and that, except his guilty soul be pardoned through faith in the atonement of Christ, and renewed by God's spirit unto inward holiness, he must be an outcast from God and from heaven for ever.

II. But I must proceed to the second head proposed, which is, to enumerate some of the principal *temptations* to these sins.

1. One of these is excess in eating and drinking, especially the latter. I had occasion to shew, under the last commandment, that intemperance destroys health, shortens life and is a species of deliberate suicide; surely then, when we further learn, that it dethrones reason, inflames the passions, and turns the man into a brutal sensualist, it ought to be shunned with utter horror and detestation. If then you would be chaste in heart and practice, be sober, be temperate; and endeavour to keep under your body, and bring it into subjection to conscience and the will of God.

2. A second temptation is a life of sloth and idleness. If a man has nothing to employ him; no professional, intellectual or spiritual subject to engage his attention and elevate his thoughts and feelings, he is open to any temptation which the enemy of his soul may present before him.—It was, when David had risen from reposing on his couch, probably after too great indulgence at the table, that he cast an adulterous eye on the wife of Uriah; and it is among persons, who relax in luxurious ease and pampered indolence; who are either raised above the necessity of pursuing some honest calling, or too idle to labour for their bread,

that vices of this kind usually prevail. It is said of notorious Sodom, that "pride and fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her."

3. Another dangerous snare and temptation, especially to ignorant, inexperienced youth, is the company and conversation of profligate men. These, being among that hardened and hopeless description of "fools, who glory in their shame," and "make a mock at sin," delight in corrupting and ruining the souls of the simple—My young hearers, who have not entered into the ways of the wicked, avoid the pestilential society of such characters. "Let not your soul come into their abominable secrets; for their feet go down to death, and their steps take hold on hell."

4. Among other temptations to impurity and licentiousness must be added, wantonness and immodesty in deportment, dress, look and gesture; indelicacy of conversation, and corrupting songs, books and pictures. If novels and plays are to be condemned under the third commandment for impious and profane expressions against the honor of God's name, they are equally detestable as destructive of simplicity and purity of heart. It is notorious, that numberless expressions are uttered on the stage,

which a modest woman would blush to read to her children at home. And I cannot but think that the foolish and filthy songs, which are sold through the country, in millions; and the vile novels which make their way even among our servants, have done more to corrupt the great mass of our population, than any other stragem of the enemy of souls. How many may be found, totally ignorant of the word of God, who have committed nothing to memory but trash of this sort; and instead of employing their lips with some sweet song of Zion, and lifting up their hearts in holy melody to Jesus their Redeemer, dwell on a contemptible song, which feeds their corrupt passions and offends the ear of God.

III. Having explained, as far as our time will allow, the sins on which this law pronounces the curse of God, and having specified the principal temptations and provocatives to them I come in the last place, to point out the best means, in addition to hints already given, whereby, under divine grace, you may be preserved from the commission of them.

1. In the first place, consider well the number and aggravation of your past sins, and how they have debased and degraded you, and brought on you the displeasure of your holy

God. O could you but seriously look on every sin of your heart and life, in this light, you would, I think, view it with abhorrence, and hate it, and loathe yourself on account of it, and war against it as an accursed thing.

2. Let a sense of your guilt and pollution convince you of your need of the blood of Jesus to atone for your impurity, and make your peace with God. A justifying faith in Christ will not only give your conscience peace, but regulate your passions and sanctify your principles. A heartfelt sense of the love of Christ making his soul an offering for your sins, and calling you by his free grace, to an interest in his salvation, to a delight in his ways, and to the hope of his glory, is the best antidote to sensuality and sin; for it kindles in the heart a flame of pure and grateful love, which burns up each "foolish and hurtful lust, that wars against the soul."

3. By virtue of this union with Christ through faith, seek from your reconciled God a larger portion of his sanctifying Spirit into your hearts. The penitent Psalmist smarting under the guilty load of his pollution, teaches you how to pray: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Create within me a clean heart, O God, and re-

new a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit."

4. Lastly, in your daily walk, bear in mind, that if you would not be "banished eternally from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," you must daily present your "bodies and souls a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service;" that "if you live after the flesh you shall die, but that if, through the Spirit, you mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live." Let it be, then, in dependence on his grace, your habitual aim and effort, to keep your heart with diligence, and to take heed to your ways, that you neither corrupt others, nor be corrupted. Guard your eyes and ears, that they be not the inlets of temptation, and your tongue that it be not the outlet of pollution. Avoid all scenes, objects, company and amusements which might hurt and defile your soul. Avoid whatever would indispose you for seriousness of mind, for studying the scriptures, religious meditation, and spiritual communion with God. Be well employed; and "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God through Christ Jesus." Carry with you into scenes of public danger

and into the retirements of privacy, the solemnizing truth, that the eye of God is upon your ways, words and thoughts; and when tempted to sin, repel the temptation with: "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God."

My brethren, the awful day will soon be here, when the secrets of all hearts will be disclosed, and all our characters be unfolded before assembled men and angels, to our comfort or confusion. Let us then hide ourselves under the righteousness of our blessed Redeemer, and live on the fulness of his grace; that our pardoned iniquities may then be mentioned only to manifest the riches of his mercy and grace, to his eternal praise and glory; and that in the mean time, we may so "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, as to perfect holiness in the fear of God."

SERMON XII.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 15.

Thou shalt not steal.

THE great Lord and Lawgiver of the world, having provided for the preservation of the lives and chastity of the human race, proceeds in this commandment to guard their property, and direct them to a right use of it.—There are three bad principles working in the corrupt heart of fallen man, closely related to each other, and producing, in conjunction, the most mischievous effects: first, unbelief, which shews itself in a blind distrust of God: secondly, an idolatrous attachment to earthly things, which inclines us to prefer the creature to the Creator, and to care for the body to the

neglect of the soul:—and thirdly, an immoderate selfishness which prompts us to seek our own private good, without regarding, nay at the expence of, the good and right of others.

It is to the combined influence of these three base principles, that we may ascribe the anxiety, avarice, worldly mindedness, cruelty, oppression, injustice and fraud, which abound in the earth, together with all the misery and wickedness which they occasion. Did we practically admit, that God would give or withhold what he saw to be best ; were men's affections fixed supremely on God and heavenly things ; and did every man consider himself as God's steward over what is put into his hands, and "look not on his own things only, but also on the things of others," with a desire to do them good, all would be well. Fraud and injustice would be unknown. There would be seen universally on earth, love without dissimulation, prudence without guile, and industry without covetousness.—Property is only an evil, when it is abused, when it becomes an idol of the heart, and a means of sin and self-indulgence ; instead of being used as a talent for the glory of God and the good of mankind. If divine grace has renewed our hearts to the supreme love of God, and fixed our affections

on the heavenly kingdom, which Christ has purchased and prepared for his people, we are not to despise property, or neglect any lawful means of acquiring it. And if proper regard to self-interest allows us thus to seek it and accept it for ourselves, common justice and christian love should incline us to wish to see it possessed by others, so far as the will of God may permit them. In any way then to hinder or injure the temporal as well as spiritual interest of ourselves or others, is to break the law, which says : “thou shalt not *steal*.”

In conformity with this principle, I shall point out what this commandment principally condemns as sins and commands as duties, first in reference to others ; secondly, with reference to ourselves.

I. What does this law forbid and command to be done in reference to others ? The sin literally forbidden is *stealing*, that is, taking that to which we have no right. When any thing is taken from another by force, it is robbery ; when secretly, theft. The wages of these sins is death eternal, except the guilty offender, like the dying thief, apply for forgiveness and mercy, to the Redeemer of lost sinners.—Stealing is necessarily visited by the law of the land, with punishments proportioned

to the several degrees of the offence. And yet, such is the proneness of men to this crime, that in defiance of the laws of God and man, and in contempt of constant examples of punishment by death, banishment and other penalties, scarce a week passes, but some new offender is committed to our prisons. The criminals who lengthen the black calendars at our assizes, chiefly consist of thieves and robbers. Still, however, the offences actually punished or punishable by our courts of justice, are but a few of the most flagrant and mischievous to society. There is an infinite variety of sins against this law too minute for a human tribunal to notice, or too disguised and refined to be punished in a free country like this, which prefers to acquit a thousand criminals, rather than condemn one innocent man. But the law of the heart-searching God is subject to no such infirmity and inconvenience;—God equally knows and notices him who steals a pin and him who steals a purse. The man that takes the smallest mite which is not his own, avows before God that he will not be satisfied with what providence allots him; and by seizing from another that to which he has no right, commits an act of direct rebellion against the word and will of God, and an act of gross injustice to man. If a

sinner tries to bribe his conscience, by flattering himself that there can be no great harm in taking a trifle, especially from one that may easily spare it, let that man consider, that if what he takes be a trifle, his sin is aggravated by taking it; since in proportion as its worth is inconsiderable, the temptation to take it is diminished. He should also consider that the devil, by prevailing with him to pilfer a small matter, has prepared him to venture upon things of greater value. Nor let any one hope that God will make allowance for him, because he is poor and needy. If his wants have been brought upon him by idleness, extravagance and profligacy, are these sins to atone for another of which they were the cause? If his own neglect or vice has not caused his distress, God saw good to send want upon him for other purposes, than tempting his hands to "pick and steal." God meant the affliction to be the outward means of humbling him for his sins; of disposing him to look above this miserable world, and to seek a portion in the salvation of Jesus Christ, that he may be rich here, in faith and peace and holy love to God, and heavenly hopes, and that, after death, he may have a crown of glory which all the kingdoms of the world cannot buy. In a country, like this, where every poor

man is entitled by law to parochial aid, no person need steal or starve. Every theft, then, is a wanton violation of the laws of God and man; and however small the thing taken, however concealed the transaction, God who sees in secret, will bring the sinner to judgment.

2. A second sin against the property of others, which incurs the curse of this law, is *cheating* and *defrauding*. This kind of stealing, (for stealing it is) is much more common than robbery or theft, inasmuch as it is much easier to contrive to wrong a person of what he ought to have, than to get from him, what he already possesses. But cheating shews equal depravity of heart as actual stealing; equal want of the fear of God, and of the love of man, and of common honesty, and is equally condemned by the word of God. "Let no man go beyond or defraud his brother," that is, any man living, "in any matter, because that the Lord is the avenger of all such." It was for fraud, not stealing, that the vengeance of God struck Ananias and Sapphira with instant death.—It would be an endless task to detail half the various kinds of imposition which depraved and selfish cunning contrives to practice on others. I can only just allude to a few of the principal, leaving it to every man's conscience to detect the rest, by

the standard of our Saviour's golden rule : " Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also unto them."—Every breach of trust, by which the interest of the employer is injured, has in it the nature of theft. If you rely on another's judgment, and he knowingly misleads you, he cheats and defrauds you. If a man promise what he knows he cannot, or does not mean to perform ; or if he gain upon another by false appearances and pretences, he sins against God under this law. Here are to be classed with thieves and robbers, the unjust steward or servant that wastes or embezzles his master's goods—the careless, unsound, unfaithful minister, who does not diligently feed his flock with the pure word of God, but keeps back the bread of life from their souls—the man who borroweth and payeth not again, though not prevented by unforeseen circumstances ; to whom must be added they who evade the taxes imposed by the government of their country.

But one of the principal and most fruitful sources of fraud, imposition and injustice lies in *bargain-making*, in buying and selling of property.—Much cheating is practised by false weights and measures. From the earliest times of trade and commercial intercourse, God

strictly forbade wrong weights and measures, as very sinful and hateful in his sight. "Thou shalt not have in thy house, divers weights a great and a small. A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the Lord." Equally unprincipled are they, who corrupt and adulterate the articles they sell, with a view to an unlawful profit.

In *making bargains*, it is a maxim, which if not openly avowed, is generally acted upon, that the buyer and seller may each take every advantage, the one to sell as dear, the other to buy as cheap as he possibly can, if only he abstain from overt dishonesty and falsehood, and even that condition is very frequently not observed. The question, what is it to buy or sell *honestly*, is one, on which the shrewd dealer, and the conscientious christian must widely differ. The selfish man of business, who remembers or regards not, that God sees his heart, and that in all his transactions he ought to do to another, what, on exchange of conditions, he would wish and expect to be done to himself, persuades himself that he acts with sufficient honesty, if he abstain from gross and literal misrepresentation, from direct and

absolute falsehood. Such a man, if the seller, will not only give his property every colouring of advantage, before he brings it to the market, but will not scruple, when he can, to make it appear better than it is. If it have, or seem to have, any good qualities, on those he dwells with all the arts of extravagant praise and persuasion. If it have any faults and defects, he not only does not confess them, but employs every artifice to hide or explain them away. He rejoices to meet with a person, whose ignorance will induce him to give, what could not be obtained from one of more judgment and experience. If, on the other hand, he is the *buyer*, he is pleased to fall in with a man ignorant of the full worth of what he has to sell, or compelled by necessity to part with it. He labours to undervalue it, by finding unfounded faults. Solomon draws his character : “ It is naught, it is naught,” saith the buyer, “ but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.” These are the principles of the professed bargain-maker : this is the shrewd and selfish honesty of a man of this world. But the conscientious follower of Christ, dares not, if he could, nor desires if he durst, to use such unfair measures, and take such unprincipled advantages. He will say no more for his property, than he

knows it deserves. He feels that he has no more right to conceal the faults it has, than to give it excellencies which he knows it has not. He would not take advantage of any man's ignorance or necessity ; but tries to preserve, in all his transactions, " a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." And surely, this ought to be the basis, on which all commerce between man and man should be conducted. Should this rule, however, be carefully and conscientiously applied to their past conduct, I doubt not, many would be obliged to confess, that they have been guilty of numerous transgressions, not only against the law of christian love, but also against common justice ; and that they have been governed, not by the grace of God, but by that spirit of artful knavery which inspires the maxims of ungodly men. Such as find this to be the character of their past dealings with mankind, have a sure proof that they are in a sinful, unconverted state ; that by every such iniquity they have broken this law of God, and brought its heavy curse upon them ; and that, except they repent, and are washed from their sins in the blood of Christ, and created anew by his spirit to love God and man ; to love righteousness

and hate injustice and iniquity, it is not possible that they can see the kingdom of heaven.

But it is possible, that several who hear me, having in general acted fairly in their dealings with mankind, and not having narrowly watched the motives and principles on which they have proceeded, are not convinced by what has been said, that they are guilty of breaking this law. They maintain that they remember not to have wronged or imposed upon any man, but have paid to every one his own, and “have been just and true in all their dealings.” Now let it be granted, that all this may be true in the case of several, especially if they have been little, or not at all engaged in business ; yet let such persons bear in mind, that if they wish to be numbered among the approved children of God, more is required and expected of them, than that they shall not have done to any one positive wilful wrong. It was not for this only, that God called them into rational existence, and that Jesus Christ died to redeem them ; and that the Holy Spirit is promised to purify them ; and that the word was written for their direction ; and that Christ and holy men have lived as examples. But it was, that they should endeavour to be holy as God is holy, and merciful as

he is merciful. It was that they should love the Lord their God, with all their hearts ; and their neighbour as themselves.—If we have this love in our hearts, we shall shew it in our conduct. We shall “ love, not in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” We shall judge that we have nothing in this world, which we have not received of God, and do not hold at his pleasure. We shall feel that we are but stewards over what God has committed to our trust, for the general good of his great family on earth. If, then, we are not only forbidden by the eighth commandment, to wrong any person, but also commanded, as much as lieth in us, to do good unto all men, it follows, that, in the use and application of the things which God has committed to us, we must avoid whatever has a tendency to prevent or limit our usefulness to others ; if we would not defraud others of their due share in the property of this world, we must make a right use of our own.

II. This brings me to notice, lastly, what this law condemns as sins, and commands as duties, in reference to ourselves.

1. It is plain, that if we would be preserved by the grace of God, from breaking this commandment, as it bears on our application of our own property, we must avoid idleness, and

God; therefore glorify him," and benefit man, "with your bodies and spirits," your talents and property "which are his."—On the other hand, forget not, that when this commandment condemns covetousness, it by no means sanctions *extravagance*. Frugality is as necessary to preserve what is honest and respectable in the sight of men, as industry is to provide it. The greater part of those wretched characters who by fraud, swindling, theft, robbery, forgery and other crimes, forfeit their lives to human laws and their souls to the justice of God, will be found to have reduced themselves to beggary, difficulty and despair, by vicious prodigality.—Many persons, of whom better and kinder things may be expected, when solicited to assist in the relief of the necessitous, or in promoting some humane or religious object, plead that they have nothing to spare, and that charity must begin at home. Will such persons be able, on the day of judgment to prove, that if indeed they have nothing to spare, their inability has been occasioned by no needless extravagance? Will they be able to shew, that nothing has been given to ostentatious display, lavished in self-indulgent excess, or squandered in expensive pleasure, which might have been saved for nobler purposes,

more suited to the character of persons, who profess not to be of this world, but to be the followers of the self-denying Jesus to his kingdom above? Let not profusion be mistaken for liberality, extravagance for charity. The Lord at the last day, will require as fruits and evidences of faith, (if we have the ability,) not how much money we have expended, but whether, for his sake and from love to him, we have given meat to the hungry, clothed the naked, instructed the ignorant, and visited the prisoner with relief. If he find upon us the proofs not only of integrity, and uprightness, but of christian love and kindness, he will give us a place in the kingdom of glory, which he purchased with his own blood. While the unjust, dishonest, slothful, covetous and selfish servant will be driven from his presence into outer darkness and everlasting woe.

In conclusion, I entreat you, my brethren, who are strangers to true repentance, to faith in Christ, and to the peace, hope and holiness of a child of God, to retire and reflect on the explanation given of this commandment, and to pray for the Holy Spirit to make you know and feel the sins you have committed against it, that you may flee to Christ to save you from its curse. And let us see all of you, who pro-

fess to trust in Christ for righteousness and life, exhibiting a growing example, not only of strict honesty and fair dealing, but of economy, liberality and kindness; and as you have opportunity, "doing good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith." "For whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him!"

SERMON XIII.
THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

THE life, chastity and property of mankind being protected by the three preceding commandments, the wisdom and goodness of our holy Lord and Lawgiver here provide security for their reputation and good name, and through these, for their peace and happiness. The primary bearing of this law is upon courts of justice; requiring impartiality in the judge and jurors; integrity in the counsel; and, above all, a strict and solemn regard for truth, without respect of persons, in the witnesses. But, sanctioned by various portions of the word of God, I shall chiefly consider it in its more extended sense, as applying to our general language and conversation.



Speech is a noble faculty, given us of God, for the purposes of communicating our thoughts, and of enjoying and promoting the comforts of social intercourse. But, like all the other faculties of fallen man, and perhaps more than any other, it is liable to be perverted and abused. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And till the heart be renewed by divine grace, and actuated by the love of God and man, we are in constant danger of offending with our lips.

Under the third commandment, I had occasion to notice the sins of the tongue which are committed against God; those now before us are sins against man. These, my brethren, require your serious attention. Let the consideration of them be made with strict self-examination, and earnest prayer for the special aid of the Divine Spirit.—These sins prevail to an awful extent. Though condemned in theory, they are countenanced in practice, and are as mischievous as they are wicked. A transgressor here is worse than a thief and a robber. "A good name," says Solomon, "is better than riches." To rob a man, then, of his good name, is a more serious injury than to steal his property.

I shall endeavour to explain the duties enjoined, and the sins condemned by this commandment, then offer some directions for performing the duties and avoiding the sins.

I. The fundamental principle, on which all God's laws respecting our duty to our fellow-creatures are built, is, that we "love our neighbour as ourselves." Where there is the abiding fear of God, and the constraining love of Christ, there charity to man will give a direction to every action of the life, and every expression of the tongue. Now this "charity rejoiceth in the truth." Every man, then, who has any pretensions to be a child of God and a christian, will put away all lying and falsehood, and will speak the truth with and of his neighbour. He will cherish a spirit of sincerity, benevolence, candor and kindness towards all. He will approve and speak well of what is good in any one; be silent, when he properly may, of what is bad; and put the best construction he fairly can, on what is doubtful. He will rejoice in the honor and prosperity, the piety and good conduct of another, and grieve at his misfortunes, follies and faults. He will derive no gratification from injuring the character, or diminishing the reputation of any human being. He will not, except when compelled by some

urgent necessity, employ truth itself to another's disadvantage. The law of kindness will sit upon his lips, and he will use no words that may do hurt.

These are the two great duties under the ninth commandment, that we speak the *truth only*, with respect to others, and that we speak it in *candor and charity*.

II. We proceed to the *sins* which this law condemns.

1. All lying, falsehood and misrepresentation respecting others is condemned. *Lying*, when employed with an intention of injuring another, is a most detestable vice. It makes a man contemptible and vile in the sight of God and man, and proves his affinity to the devil, who is a "liar, and the father of lies."—Next to absolute falsehood is *detraction*. Detraction is the wilful and wanton attempt to lessen the credit, and impair the good name and qualities of another; and includes all that we understand by tale-bearing, censoriousness, slander, evil-speaking, and rash judging.—Nothing can afford a more melancholy proof, how little the minds of the people of the world are impressed and occupied with spiritual and eternal things, and how destitute they are of the tender and benevolent disposition that was in Christ, than the general tenor and

topics of their conversation. Was it not for the exquisite amusement of discussing the characters, conduct and circumstances of others, how insipid would be their visits, to which each is expected to bring his portion of the news of the day ; that these being enriched with the observations of the party, may be re-issued with new embellishments. If the conversation turn upon the misconduct or the misfortune of one whose character has been respectable, and whose success in life has been great, especially if he has been a rivalled equal, or an envied superior, the subject evidently appears to afford lively satisfaction. If, on the other hand, he be rising in prosperity, respect and reputation, and particularly if he be eminent for piety, zeal, separation from the world, and devotedness to God, a competition will arise who shall most effectually bring him down to a lower level. It is not his actions only that are dissected, his very motives and principles are decided upon, without fear and without mercy. His good qualities are suspected to be superficial, his infirmities and defects, (such as they readily overlook in other men), are magnified into crimes, and for one single fault he is adjudged to be an hypocrite. His zeal for Christ and for souls is pronounced to be enthusiasm ; his self-denial and non-con-

formity to the world, to be preciseness; his gravity, to be gloomy fanaticism; his cheerfulness, to be levity; his industry and economy, to be covetousness; his liberality, to be extravagance or ostentation. In short, there is no decided christian, be his conduct ever so exemplary, but has shared in his master's fate, from a censorious world.—And where there is a propensity to be gratified with remarks and reports at another's expense, the evil seldom stops there. The conversation of the uncharitable mind often degenerates into *slander*. Truth itself is violated, and *falsities* known to be such, are invented and issued. Was it not that the world abounds with pestilential characters, whose “lips speak wickedness, and whose tongues utter deceit,” it is impossible that so many false and slanderous tales should be in perpetual circulation. Prudent and candid persons have learnt to suspect all reports which go about to the disadvantage of others.—In the class of foul calumniators, we must place, not only them, who forge a falsity and send it forth, with a deliberate design to do injury to another, by wounding his character or his peace; but also such as intentionally assist in giving a story that effect.—If I should add to an injurious report any unsupported remarks of my own,

and incorporate them as a part of it: If I should tell it in such a manner as to imply and insinuate more than I am authorized; or should keep back any part of it, which is in favor of the person: If I should repeat it, when I had reason to suspect, or an opportunity of knowing it to be false: If I should employ terms of reproach, misrepresentation and ridicule upon the views or practices of any set of men, especially on a religious account, which truth does not sanction, nor candor allow, I should be a vile slanderer; and that holy Jesus, who has said, "Woe unto them, by whom offences come," would bring me to judgment.—But further, be it so, that we have originated no falsity, misrepresented no fact, nor helped forward one single report not founded in truth, we are not hereby justified. If we talk needlessly on the misconduct of others, we sin, if not against truth, against charity, which should teach us to hide, not publish the faults and follies of our brethren. If we tell abroad what, though true, is likely to do no good, and produce some harm, we come under condemnation, as mischievous *tale-bearers*. The words of a "tale-bearer are as wounds." "A whisperer separateth chief friends." And as the blessing of the Lord resteth on the peace-maker, his curse falls on

those tongues, which cause disturbance and do hurt. Nay, if the knowledge of the circulation of a report to another's disadvantage, though we be silent, gives us a secret pleasure, it proves the depraved, unchristian state of our minds ; it proves, that if envy or malice do not lurk within, pride, cruelty and uncharitableness, those roots of infernal bitterness, grow there. He who has said : " Speak well of thy neighbour," has also said : " Judge not, that thou be not judged."

It is an act of dangerous and sinful rashness to form our opinions of men, without careful examination ; and still more so, to pronounce fearlessly upon their intentions, principles and characters. They who do it most, are the least acquainted with their own hearts ; they detect a mote in another's eye, when they might perceive a beam in their own.

There is another species of evil-speaking not to be passed unnoticed, which strongly marks the hypocrisy of the heart, and which abounds, especially in polite life—need I say, the use of language of unfelt compliment and flattery. It will be sufficient to observe, that every expression which conveys what we do not think and believe, is a falsity ; that a falsity, employed in flattery, is as much a lie, as when employed



in scandal; and that for every idle and insincere word, whether intended to injure or to please, God will call us to account.

Such, brethren, are some of the more prominent duties and sins, which fall under the ninth commandment. Before I proceed to offer some directions for fulfilling the former and avoiding the latter, I would gladly assist you in the enquiry, how far you are each involved in the guilt of transgressing this law; an enquiry which, though necessary for self-knowledge and salvation, we are all naturally inclined entirely to avoid, or slightly to make. Let us, then, each, here in the temple and presence of God, ask ourselves: "Do I never indulge in evil-speaking? Do I never venture to form an unfavourable opinion of another, and give it currency, when I am not sure it is correct, and when it may do him harm? Have I no pleasure in telling and talking of things which tend to injure my fellow-creature's peace, character, or interest; not even of one, who is of the same profession, situation and circumstances with myself? Do I derive no secret satisfaction from the misfortunes or misconduct of such persons? When I witness their growing prosperity and respectability, do I take no delight in insinuating any thing to their discredit?"

Do I never indulge in hollow flattery, in tale-bearing, and harsh, censorious remark? Have I preserved such regard, not only to truth, but also to christian charity and tenderness respecting others, that when I could not speak in their favor, I have resolved to be silent; covering their infirmities, or follies, or unpromising affairs, with the mantle of love?"—Alas! who can say, he is not guilty? Who has not offended against the law of charity ten thousand times? Which of us, then, will dare to persuade himself, that in numberless instances, he has not brought down the curse of this holy commandment upon his soul.—I am quite sure, that if memory and conscience do their office, there is not an individual in this church, who is not convinced, that if the Lord have not mercy upon him, for sins committed against this *law only*, he must perish eternally. Brethren, let us act under this conviction. Let us pray for the Holy Spirit to impress it powerfully upon our hearts; and let the law have its proper and designed effect upon us, by sending us to Jesus Christ in deep contrition of soul, that he may blot out our transgressions by his blood, and save us from condemnation.

The requirements of this commandment also confirm the important truth, which all the

preceding have taught us, not only that we are inexcusable, lost sinners, whom Christ alone can save; but also that we must be renewed in the spirit of our minds, "must be born again" by the Holy Spirit, before we can have the disposition and the power to keep the law of God. That the tongue may uniformly speak to the glory of God, and to the comfort, credit and benefit of mankind, the heart must be purified and refined by the love of God and man. It is the tongue of a good man only, that will bring forth good things. Without this blessed change, it is quite vain to exhort you to endeavour to glorify God, by observing this commandment or any other.— If you have good reason to believe that you are united to Christ by faith, and that your hearts are converted to God, you will thankfully receive directions for being enabled, by his gracious assistance, to obey the commands and avoid the sins that have been specified in the consideration of this law.

1. Your first object must be to moderate that spirit of idle curiosity, which is too natural to us all, and which is particularly discernible in persons of a trifling and censorious cast of mind. Curious persons are generally talkative, as ready to tell news as to receive it. Such a dis-

position quite unfits the mind for any thing solid, serious and spiritual. It is a specimen of the frivolous spirit which reigned at Athens, in the days of Paul, and disqualified their minds for listening to the momentous truths of the gospel of Christ. "They spent their time," we are told, "in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing."

2. It is quite necessary, that the roots of bitterness, ambition and jealousy be eradicated from your hearts. So long as you feel a dislike or grudge against any person, the devil will succeed in tempting you to receive and tell any thing to his prejudice. When the Lord opens the hearts of his humble, believing children, to love all and seek the good of all, then the "law of kindness will sit upon their lips." From others, what can we look for, but envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings and every evil word and work.

3. A lovely grace, which by its fruits attests its heavenly origin, and which it is absolutely necessary should dwell in the heart, that the tongue may not offend, is that self-acquaintance which produces *humility*. There is not so sure a preservative from speaking hastily or harshly of others, as a deep consciousness of our own vileness and unworthiness in the sight of God.

He who painfully feels what a mystery of iniquity is lodged in his own breast, is the only proper person to pass judgment upon others; for he can see nothing in their actions, of which he does not detect the seeds and principles in his own heart. He is convinced that it is owing to his not being exposed to equal temptations, and to the restraining power of God's sovereign grace only, that he is not as depraved as the vilest of sinners. Instead, therefore, of railing at offending persons, or censuring them without mercy, he learns to pity and bear with them, and to adore the grace which makes him to differ, and which is magnified in such weakness and depravity as his. No man knows so little of himself as a proud, self-righteous person, such as was the pharisee, who went up to the temple to pray, or rather to boast and to revile, along with the despised publican; and no one is so cruel and unmerciful with his tongue. "When I see a fault in another," (observes a late humble, excellent Divine) "I conclude that I may find two in myself."—Oh, let us all desire to grow in humility and lowliness of mind, and we shall become tender-hearted as Jesus was. Let us implore the Holy Spirit to dispose and enable us to search deeply into our own hearts, and to give us a just insight

into the black abominations which defile us there, and we shall never more open our lips, in severe censure or slanderous calumny, against any one living.

Lastly, in order to be preserved from a vain, curious spirit, and from censorious, uncharitable conversation about others, let us seek to have our hearts deeply interested in nobler and more important subjects—in “the things that belong to our everlasting peace.”—What objects of real compassion are those among us, who have nothing above this world to employ their thoughts and tongues upon;—how low their views, how empty their minds, how heavy their time must often be! What wonder that they should seek relief and amusement in talking of others; and that tattling, censoriousness and scandal should yield the zest to their conversation. Happy are they, whose eyes divine grace has opened in the knowledge of God and themselves;—who can dwell with holy and grateful lips on an adorable Saviour, a pardoning God, and an expected crown of glory; happy, though clothed in rags, and lodged in a cottage.—While they can interest themselves in such themes, they are never at a loss for profitable and satisfying subjects for reflection and conversation. They have a continual feast which

the glare of wealth, the pride of rank, and all the pleasures of sense cannot yield. Far is their's from being a dull and insipid life. They are not compelled to draw upon the world around them for pastime, and for relief from weariness of themselves. They need not to seek their amusement and happiness, and they wish not to feed their pride, in canvassing the faults or miseries of others; in uttering the harsh remark or the censorious tale. How Christ loved, died, lives, justifies and saves—how God hears, pardons, strengthens, defends and preserves his people—how the Holy Spirit enlightens, sanctifies and comforts—how God is to be served and glorified, and mankind benefited—how near, how glorious their admission into the kingdom of heaven—Subjects like these occupy their thoughts, employ their tongues, and spiritualize their hearts. If they have any one to praise, it is the Lord; if any to blame, it is themselves.—Oh, my brethren, let us seek to have our hearts filled with the love of God, and transformed into the humble, meek, benevolent, spiritual image of our Redeemer, then shall we find it easy to “keep our tongue from evil, and our lips that they speak no guile;” then our speech will be seasoned, not with acrimony, but with grace, ministering not to the injury

and unhappiness, but to the good and comfort of others. Then will "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from us, with all malice, and we shall be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us."

SERMON XIV.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus xx. 17.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

IT is a fatal mistake, to confine the application of the law of God to the outward conduct of men. As it is in the heart that the motives for action originate, the heart, in the view of our omniscient God, is the seat of character.—In explaining all the preceding commandments, I have endeavoured to prove, from the divine authority of scripture, the reference of each of them to the heart and principles, as well as to the words and actions of men. And if the tenth commandment does not apply directly and entirely to what passes within us, it applies

to nothing, it has no meaning. To *covet* is purely an inward act; and if to covet is a sin, which exposes to the curse of God's law, the possibility may be conceived, that a being might perish for the sins of his heart, who had never committed an actual outward sin in his life. Indeed, if man is a fallen creature; if the love of God and goodness dwells not naturally within him; if from within originate all evil thoughts, desires and dispositions, we are sure, that it is in the heart of any, of every unregenerate man, that God discovers the great storehouse of his corruptions and his guilt. If, then, my brethren, we would not mistake our character, and ruin our souls, let us not narrow the authority and application of God's law. If we would so "judge ourselves as not to be judged of the Lord," we must give his law its full scope, in searching and trying the very ground of our hearts, by tracing every impure stream up to its fountain there.—The tenth commandment is that especially, under which we have this humbling search to make. May God, whose province it is to try the heart and the reins, assist each of us to perform this task, faithfully, effectually and profitably. The sin here specified is *concupiscence*.

In all the commandments, where one kind of sin is forbidden, all others of the same family are included. Under murder are condemned anger, revenge, and all malicious, injurious conduct; under adultery, all impurity and licentiousness. The same latitude of interpretation must be taken here, otherwise many heart sins, condemned in other parts of God's word, would entirely escape the cognizance of the moral law.—Concupiscence means *desire*:—when *condemned*, when it is an evil concupiscence, it is a *wrong* desire; wrong in its *object*, or wrong in *degree*. But we must understand the term as comprehending all the corrupt feelings and workings of the heart; all unholy thoughts, depraved imaginations, immoral propensities; “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” As, however, by laying open the nature and character of one species of the evil fruit of the heart, a method is presented for detecting and judging of the rest, I shall chiefly confine myself to the particular subject of my text.

The sin here condemned, is opposite to the duty and grace of *contentment* with our condition, and with God's dealings with us. Let us, then, now enquire into its nature and character.

Besides our *understanding*, by which we think and judge; and our *will*, by which we choose or avoid, God has further endowed us with *affections* and *passions*, through which almost every thing presented to our senses or our imagination appears to us good or bad, pleasant or disagreeable, desirable or the contrary. When ever any object, which so occurs, appears to us to be agreeable and attractive, we instantly feel pleasure in it and a desire after it, before we have willed to choose and to seek it. Now it is this desire, or tendency of the affections, when it is of a wrong kind, which is here condemned as *concupiscence*. All desires after what we perceive or think of, are by no means sinful. If man had not been a fallen creature, darkened in his understanding and corrupted in his heart, his affections would have been well placed, and all his desires lawful and right. His soul would have gone out supremely after the glorious and blessed God as his portion and delight; and when any earthly object had exhibited itself to his senses or his thoughts, having a tendency to defile his soul and divide his heart from God, there would have been no propensity within him to court the temptation, and to catch the destructive flame. But now, since the heart is alienated from God, debased

and sensualized ; since we naturally and obstinately desire and pursue, as our chief good, such earthly objects as offer us pleasure, wealth, honor, or indulgence, it follows, that till regenerated by the Spirit of God, the natural desires and elementary workings of our hearts are disorderly and wrong. They act upon us, much as instinct on irrational animals, in impelling us to a certain line of conduct, and that conduct bad. For they pervert the judgment, corrupt the affections and misdirect the will ; and lay the foundation of almost all sin in the heart and in practice. These are the sins of *concupiscence* which the Lord forbids by : “thou shalt not *covet*.” Concupiscence may be sinful, with respect to its *degree* and with respect to its *object*.

1. With respect to its *degree*. Our inclinations and desires become sinful when they are inordinately set upon temporal things, even upon such as are lawful. This is implied in the command : “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, servant, ox or ass.” It is quite lawful and innocent, so to desire the property of another, as to wish to purchase it, if he be disposed to sell, and if it be convenient and proper for us to buy. But if when we see or think of what another has, we are uneasy and dissatis-

fied; if our thoughts and desires dwell upon it, so as to make us unhappy, envious and discontented, we prove that we are destitute of christian love, and resignation to the will of God. If our desires and thoughts are set much upon earthly objects, and little or not at all upon divine and spiritual blessings, we have within us a spirit of sinful concupiscence or unholy desire; we are carnally minded, and are making "provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof."

2. The other kind of concupiscence is that which respects the *object* of our affections and desires. If there arise in our hearts an inclination towards an attainment which is sinful in its nature or clearly forbidden to us, such an inclination is unquestionably wicked, and is condemned by: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife."—Every time we feel within a propensity to wish for and to do what God, by his word or providence, says, it is not lawful for thee to have or to do, whatever the object may be, whether in itself lawful or unlawful, we sin in our hearts against him.—And we sin, whenever such propensity has its source in pride, ambition, envy, avarice, sensuality, or any other base motive, even though such feelings and desires are confined to our thoughts

and imaginations, and do not prevail on the will to resolve to act upon them. Every discontented feeling, every selfish wish, every impure and irreverent imagination, every proud, vain, uncharitable thought, though cautiously locked up in the heart, and perfectly invisible in our outward behaviour, has polluted us in the holy eye of God; it is *evil concupiscence*.

But this view of the extent of the divine law cannot be admitted by any man living, without a consciousness that it brings home a deep charge of guilt upon himself. Many, therefore, try to pacify their consciences with a false peace, by objecting to so extensive an application of the law of God. They argue: "such mere desires and thoughts, and imaginations cannot be condemning sins. Sin is a wilful, actual transgression of the law. Though irregular and depraved imaginations arise in my heart, yet if they be not solicited and encouraged by me, if they are excited by temptations which I did not seek, and if I do not yield the consent of my will to act under their influence, how can I be chargeable with sin as a transgressor of God's law?" As I believe many, by the aid of such plausible reasonings as these, are enabled to support a delusion which will be destructive to their souls, by hiding from themselves their true

character, and keeping them from seeking mercy and grace through Christ Jesus, as sinners *deeply corrupt*, and *exceedingly guilty*, it will be necessary to endeavour to expose the fallacy, and convince them of their fatal error.

In the first place, then, it is not true, that we are polluted by no inward working of the heart, except there be a consent in the will, to commit the sin to which such working would lead. There may be many reasons, why a person, who cherishes sinful thoughts and desires in his heart, may refuse the consent of his will to fulfil them. A disaffected subject may strongly wish evil against the government of his sovereign, and yet, from various causes, may not give the consent of his will, to take up arms in rebellion. Still, if his prince could see his heart, he would pronounce him a rebel and a traitor.

2. Allowing the consent of the will to be necessary to constitute a sin, what follows? Who is innocent? Suppose the will to consent only so far as to cherish concupiscence in the heart, and that it stops there, does not God see it as distinctly, and view it with as much abhorrence, as a bad outward action? And who will dare to say, that he has never given the consent of his will to *entertain* irregular desires, appetites and passions in his heart? Who will

say, that no unholy inclination or imagination has ever been allowed to rest one moment on his mind, but that they have all passed away, like the image of a face on a mirror, and left no impression behind? Does not every one know and feel, that unlawful desires, corrupt affections and vain and sinful thoughts are natural to him; that they are put in motion, by every object calculated to excite them, as the rays of the sun exhale noxious vapours from putrid substances; and that in times innumerable, instead of being instantly checked and mortified, they have been courted, cherished and enjoyed?—Such inclinations, so indulged, are indisputably sinful in themselves; and they mark the corrupt character of our natural state by the fall. This state is called in scripture the “*old man*,” which, we are told, shews itself to be corrupt by “deceitful lusts.” And the Apostle reminds his Ephesian converts, that they “were once dead in trespasses and sins;” and the proof was, that they “had their conversation in the lusts of their flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and thereby became the children of God’s wrath, even as others.”

The sinful character of concupiscence or inbred corruption, is further proved by the

deadly fruits it yields, as St. James has well illustrated it. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust," or sinful desire of any kind, "and enticed." Here is the state of a man listening and acceding to the voice of depraved desires and affections within him; and mark the consequence: "When lust hath conceived," or obtained the concurrence of the will, "it bringeth forth," deliberate "sin;" "and sin, when it is finished," by actual transgression, "bringeth forth death."—Oh, what a legion of evils, crimes and miseries, springs from that species of concupiscence, or inordinately covetous desire after earthly things, which my text more immediately condemns. To that bitter and accursed root we may trace the anxiety and fretfulness; the discontent and envy; the jealousy and hatred, which agitate the breasts of the selfish, avaricious, and worldly-minded. It is evil concupiscence, which usually opens the lips to censure, calumny and complaint, or to arrogance and vain-boasting. It is this which gives birth to schemes of low cunning and imposition; to cheating and fraud; to oppression and wrong. It was this which led Achan to steal the golden wedge, Ahab to covet the garden and take the life of Naboth, and Judas to sell and betray his Lord. It is

this concupiscence, this hard-hearted desire for more, to which, as to a parent, we must refer all adventures in lotteries, and the various kinds of gambling, which prove the ruin of the property, peace and souls of thousands. It is this, that has been the moving principle in that system of wild speculation in commerce, which has contributed to bring the present embarrassment and distress upon the country. And to it are to be ascribed many of the quarrels and law-suits, the suicides and the murders, which so much abound among us.

Having shewn what is meant in holy scripture by concupiscence, and proved that it is highly sinful in itself, and the fruitful parent of many of the worst of sins, let us proceed to apply the subject each to his own case and conscience, so that by the blessing of God's Holy Spirit, the self-righteous may be convinced of sin, and the humble and sincere directed and encouraged in the path of life.

I would earnestly and affectionately urge a serious attention to the demands and application of this law, upon such of my hearers as have not been convinced of their great sinfulness, and of their need of a Saviour. Do not, I entreat you, my brethren, pass over the real state of your hearts, and turn, for a false hope, to the

fancied excellence of your virtuous life, and fair moral character. The tenth commandment, you find, bears exclusively on what passes *within* you. It is a heavenly lamp given you for the purpose of exploring the deep recesses of the heart, and of discovering the mystery of iniquity, which lies concealed there even from yourselves. Let me assure you, that many of the humblest and holiest of real believers in Christ, who are unaffectedly willing to class themselves among the vilest of sinners, were, previously to their present views, as correct and respectable in their moral conduct as any of you can be; and yet under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, they have learned and felt their true character and condition, by the knowledge which this commandment has given them, of the corruption of their nature, and the sins of their heart. Of this truth, the eminent Apostle, St. Paul, is a memorable instance. His had been a life strictly religious, and uniformly moral. "Touching the righteousness" which consists in the outward observance of the other commandments, "he was blameless;" so that if there had not been given a law, which applies to the desires, affections, and various workings of the heart, he might have lived and died a stranger to himself, and have perished in his

self-righteous pride. It was through the power of divine grace, by means of this commandment, that he obtained an insight into the extent of sin and of his own sinfulness. "I had not known sin," he writes, (that is, I had not perceived that concupiscence was sin,) "except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." Here he saw what he was in inward pollution and guilt, as viewed by a holy, heart-searching God. From that moment, all his self-righteous hopes are abandoned, and his language is: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

My brethren, if you would not die under a delusion, embrace this method of knowing yourselves. If almighty grace, by the light of this commandment, give you an adequate and impressive sense of the unholiness of your affections, and their alienation from God, and of all the depraved thoughts, desires and tempers which you have harboured there, you will no longer justify, but abhor yourselves; and with a contrite spirit, will thankfully look to the Lamb of God to wash away your guilt, by his precious blood, and by his Spirit to

“create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you.”

We have now gone through the ten commandments which compose the unchangeable moral law of Jehovah. I have endeavoured to lay plainly and faithfully before you the purport of each, according to the rule of explanation supplied by the rest of God’s inspired word. I appeal to the honest judgment of my hearers, whether the meaning and bearing of any one commandment have been stretched beyond what is expressly commanded and required by other parts of scripture.—Then the law has been explained just as God means it to be understood by us, and in the extent in which it will be taken by him on the day of judgment. Can it, then, be possible, that any one who has attended with seriousness, honesty and application to himself, will ever hereafter think of venturing the salvation of his soul, in any degree, on his own works and goodness? Is it possible, that any such person is not convinced, that in times beyond number, he has, in thought, word or deed, broken every one of the ten commandments of the law? But every transgression of the law is sin; and “the wages of each sin is death.” If, then, any here present, after being in their own consciences convicted

of sin, of innumerable sins, especially of sins of the heart, are still unhappily determined to resist the charge, or to despise the consequences, and will not make the "law their schoolmaster, to bring them to Christ," for mercy and life, as God's free gift in him, since they obstinately act against light and conviction, when they stand before God in judgment, they will be speechless and hopeless.—But I would confidently hope better things of many among you, even of several who have not yet actually fled for refuge to the hope which the gospel sets before you. I rely upon the power of God's promised grace, not only to convey to your understandings a perception of the depravity of your nature, and of the sinfulness of your lives, but to impress it powerfully on your hearts. To such of you, the tidings of the gospel will be sweet and reviving. For you "there is mercy and plenteous redemption," through the blood of Jesus. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Flee then, by faith, each alarmed and self-condemned sinner, flee from the thunderings of Sinai to the cross on Calvary. Look up to Christ, bearing your sins in his own body on the tree, and redeeming you from the curse of the law. Thus will all your sins be forgiven; God will become

your reconciled father ; the law will have no power to condemn you ; and peace, and grace, and glory will be your happy portion, as the redeemed of the Lord ; the adopted children of the living God.

Lastly, do we make void the law to them who, by believing in Jesus, are no longer under it as a covenant, but under grace ? God forbid. The law is holy, just and good, and all the truly regenerate children of God delight in it, after the inward man, and, longing after holiness, make it a light to their feet, and a lamp to their path. Every christian, who is acquainted with his own character, and with the extent and spirituality of the law, is deeply sensible of his many remaining defects and corruptions, especially in the affections and dispositions of his mind ; for he endeavours to make the law the rule of his life, and faithfully employs it as the standard by which he estimates his evidences, and decides upon his state. Feeling, then, the littleness of our stature in grace and holiness, let us ever be reaching forwards after a nearer conformity to the holy law and will of God. And while we place all our hopes for acceptance with God on the merits and mediation of his dear Son, let us with conscientious fidelity bring, not only our words

and actions, but also our principles, thoughts, affections, tempers, motives and desires to the law, as the only test of character. Let us rest in no attainments which we may have been enabled to make, but let us ever press after the yet far distant heights of perfect holiness. And let us continually beseech Almighty God, not only to have mercy upon us, for his dear Son's sake, but also to write all these his holy laws more deeply in our hearts. Thus shall we make our calling and election more and more sure to ourselves, and better adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour; and, when he appears, shall have an abundant entrance administered unto us, into his everlasting kingdom, for the sake of his merits.

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